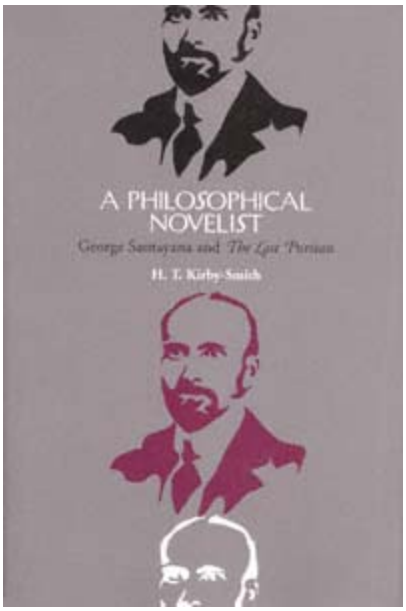

title:	A Philosophical Novelist : George Santayana and The Last Puritan
author:	Kirby-Smith, H. T.
publisher:	Southern Illinois University Press
isbn10 | asin:	0809321130
print isbn13:	9780809321131
ebook isbn13:	9780585187013
language:	English
subject	Santayana, George,--1863-1952.--Last Puritan, Philosophy in literature.
publication date:	1997
lcc:	PS2772.L3K57 1997eb
ddc:	813/.52
subject:	Santayana, George,--1863-1952.--Last Puritan, Philosophy in literature.

A Philosophical Novelist

George Santayana and The Last Puritan

H. T. Kirby-Smith

Southern Illinois University Press
Carbondale and Edwardsville

Copyright © 1997 by the Board of Trustees, Southern Illinois University
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America
00 99 98 97 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Kirby-Smith, H. T. (Henry Tompkins), 1938
A philosophical novelist : George Santayana and The last puritan / H. T. Kirby-Smith.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Santayana, George, 18631952. Last Puritan. 2. Philosophy in literature. I. Title.
PS2772.L3K57 1997
813'.52dc20 96-43073
ISBN 0-8093-2113-0 (alk. paper) CIP

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information SciencesPermanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

For Noel and Susan;
to the memory of Hugh Caldwell,
who introduced me to philosophy;
and with thanks to my mother for introducing me
to Santayana

Contents

Preface ix

1 1
Introduction: A Question of Style

2 11
Some Sources of Santayana's Philosophy

3 26
Spinoza

4 49
The Realm of Essence

5 67
The Realm of Matter

6 82
Detachment from Persons and Places and Things

7 99
In Search of Substance

8 113
The Realm of Spirit: *The Last Puritan*

9 139
Philosophy into Fiction

10 169
Santayana and His Critics

Appendix: An Unpublished Letter 197
Works Cited 199
Index 203

Preface

George Santayana, whose reputation suffered a temporary eclipse during the thirty years following his death in 1952, appears to be resuming his position among the important philosophers of the twentieth century. Ten years ago no decent biography of Santayana existed; fortunately, as it turned out, John McCormick had been occupied for some time with just such a work, which appeared in 1987 and which proved to be somewhat more than merely "decent"; I would call it the best biography of the decade about anyone. By that time the Santayana Project was well under way, the basic scholarship for which had been put into place by Herman J. Saatkamp Jr., William G. Holzberger, and others. Studies by John Lachs and Anthony Woodward appeared the following year (1988), with more specialized treatments continuing into the 1990s: papers, monographs, an increasing number of theses and dissertations, and Henry Levinson's *Santayana, Pragmatism, and the Spiritual Life*. Other studies touch substantially on Santayana, such as Robert Dawidoff's *The Genteel Tradition and the Sacred Rage*. A solid foundation had been laid even at the nadir of Santayana's posthumous fortunes by Timothy L. S. Sprigge's thorough and sympathetic study, *Santayana: An Examination of His Philosophy*, published in 1974 and reissued in a revised and enlarged edition in 1995. Since 1986, the Santayana Project has, in steady increments, made individual works available in definitive editions issued by the MIT Press. Santayana was nothing if not prolific, however, and there remain more than two

dozen works to be edited, not to speak of thousands of unpublished letters.

Despite the relative neglect between 1950 and 1980, so much has been printed about and by Santayanaalready filling many linear feet of library shelvingthat it might seem that further discussion would be superfluous, at least for the time being. But I have identified a few things that deserve more careful attention. *The Last Puritan* has never been accorded the analysis that would bring out the themes and patterns that Santayana repeatedly hinted were to be found in it. Enjoyed by numerous readers, it seems to have escapedperhaps fortunatelythe scrutiny of all schools of literary criticism in vogue since the 1950s. The present study, accordingly, focuses primarily on the novel; those more closely familiar with Santayana and his thought than I am may not wish to agree that everything revealed by my microscope is actually present, or pres-

ent in the forms that I have identified, but my account may stimulate discussion and, even better, reading of the book.

A second purpose is to summarize as clearly as possible exactly how Santayana assimilated other philosophies into his own. Too often, the temptation is to identify Santayana's views with oneor at best, a fewother thinkers. Since the close of the Middle Ages, philosophy has been a matter of one major school or figure displacing or superseding another in the quest for a set of truths based on incontrovertible arguments. Santayana's procedure has more in common with Aquinaswithout being neo-Thomistic. Santayana assimilated as much as possible from all available philosophies and never claimed originality for himself. For him, philosophy meant the rational adjustment and harmonizing of various points of view. Although I have scarcely begun to cover everything touched on by Santayana, I have tried to identify enough of the most important strains to show that this is the right way toward understanding him.

I must admit to a constantly renewed astonishment at the failure of discussions of Santayana to place much emphasis on Spinoza. In collecting Spinozisms from all his works, I have only sought to document what he said over and over from his first published work to his lastthat Spinoza was the foundation and the inspiration for his entire philosophy. In saying that, I may seem to have fallen into the same error that I warned against a few sentences agoof pigeonholing Santayana. But one only needs to read the very severe criticism of Spinoza that was originally excised from his autobiographyas well as various other expressions of reserveto realize that one can no more write him

off as a Spinozist than one can classify him as a Thomist, a Platonist, or a pragmatist. The best and the worst among us are prey to such erroneous classifications: Bertrand Russell at one point identified Santayana's views with Leibnitz, while one troublesome would-be disciple, Richard Butler, found Santayana essentially Kantian. Actually he is all these things at onceand much more.

Although one will come away from McCormick's biography (and from Santayana's own autobiography, reissued as a single-volume *Persons and Places*) with a sense of personal acquaintance with him, it seemed to me useful to consider even more closely the reciprocities that exist between his life, his personality, and his philosophy. I have therefore tried also to offer a psychographic portrait of Santayana and his work, my models being Sainte-Beuve and, after him, Edmund Wilson. Because Santayana was himself such an acute analyst of these relations, one hesitates to second-guess him. But in a few cases, I may have succeeded in viewing him and his work from angles that he could not have achieved with any amount of reflection.

Santayana came in for more than his share of abusive criticism toward the

end of his life. In the concluding chapter, I explain the reasons why this occurred and trace the sources of some misunderstandingsespecially the genesis and perpetuation of the "perfection of rottenness" remark. I also point out the questionable motivations and methods of the detractors. In short, the last chapter is something of a legal brief in defense of Santayana.

The intention of my book is, finally, to encourage further reading of Santayana, the most acute critic ofamong other thingsAmerican values who has yet emerged. His popularity earlier in this century assured large printings of his books, especially the novel and the autobiography, which were Book-of-the-Month Club selections. Staple philosophical works are kept in print by the Dover Press: *The Sense of Beauty, Scepticism and Animal Faith*, and five separate volumes of *The Life of Reason*. I have also mentioned the MLA-approved scholarly editions of the Santayana Project, with the two volumes most likely to win popular attention available in relatively inexpensive paperbacks: *Persons and Places* and *The Last Puritan*.

Irving Singer's introduction to the new edition of *The Last Puritan* (1995) is excellent, and it may be captious to take exception to anything in itespecially since it casts light on many facets and angles that my own study of the novel may have missed. As he approaches the end of the introduction, Singer touches on a quality in Santayana that some have found unattractive:

> The ludicrous, and even grotesque, traits of these characters intrigue us because we see them from the Olympian vantage of Santayana's

> satire and burlesque. His epigrammatic insights encourage us to feel that we too can share his great amusement in observing, at a comfortable distance, the foibles and stupidities of other people.
>
> In giving us access to this display, which is not always pleasant to watch, Santayana may often seem cruel and possibly malicious. I think he sometimes is. More pervasively, however, tragic and comic elements in his novel emanate from a good will not totally dissimilar from the one that Santayana admired in Dickens. (xl)

If we can substitute *unforgiving* or even *merciless* for *malicious*, I will be more completely in agreement with Singer. Santayana remained literally Spanish to the end of his life and beyond. He never took any other citizenship and retained his Spanish passport; he is buried in a Spanish cemetery in Rome. There is in Santayana something fatalistic and sardonic, something akin to the stony landscape surrounding Avila, where he grew up. This quality he shares with some of his compatriotsGoya and Cervantes, for examplea tough acceptance of things as they really are, including the reality of illusion. A little further on,

Singer speaks of *The Last Puritan* as "an epiphany of his spirit and a testament to spirit everywhere." No more illuminating comment on the novel has been written.

Santayana's writings have been printed and reprinted in many editions; documentation is a therefore a problem. Since numerous copies of the original printings of *The Last Puritan* still existcatalogued in thousands of libraries, handed down in family collections, and on the shelves of used-book storesI first give page references to that edition. This is partly sentimental self-indulgence: I still own the now-disintegrating copy bought by my mother in 1936 and that I first read more than forty years ago, as a seventeen-year-old who found nothing else to read in a beach cabin. I suppose that Santayana's picture of Oliver's adolescence was enough to keep me interested, along with other details that rang true; I knew nothing about philosophy. In any event, all citations to the original edition of the book are followed with page references in brackets to the new edition.

It has been customary, partly because of the drama surrounding its publication and partly because of its success, to refer to the first volume of Santayana's autobiography as *Persons and Places,* which was subtitled *The Background of My Life*. The second and third installments of the autobiography are generally known by their separate titles, *The Middle Span* and *My Host the World*, although Scribner's chose to refer to them as volumes 2 and 3 of *Persons and Places*. In the rare instance when I cite the newer, one-volume edition of the autobiography, *Persons and Places* (1986), I give the date in parentheses to distinguish it from the original first volume published in 1944.

Where I have included multiple passages from different pages of a given work in one quotation, I have been careful to quote complete sentences or complete thoughts and to indicate any omitted text with marks of ellipsis. In so doing, I have avoided the sometimes deceptive practice of stringing together an author's words from different contexts to form sentences.

I am grateful to the administration and staff of Jackson Library at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, who have been endlessly helpful and pleasant and who never asked when I was going to be finished with this project. I appreciate the friendly interest of colleagues, such as Donald Darnell and the late Arthur Dixon. My wife and daughter have been very tolerant for years of my having my nose stuck in a philosophy bookthough come to think of it, I was probably less trouble that way.

1
Introduction
A Question of Style

"Speak, that I may see thee," said Ben Jonson, a moralist who equated style with character. Even those who do not give George Santayana a good character often credit him with good style, though they imply that the "nacreous" or "iridescent" surface of his discourse dazzles us with its sheen so that we excuse more than we should. Others say of him what Mommsen said of Renan, that he was a true savant in spite of his beautiful style. Pater, Ruskin, and Emerson were the reigning sages in Santayana's youth; at times he emulated them in refinement of rhetoric to the same degree that he departed from them in substance. His suasive eloquence drew readers to his work and prompted assent, often in the absence of comprehension.

But whether you favor Santayana or oppose him, it will not do to speak of his style in the singular. He had numerous styles. As he composed, he was always conscious of putting on a literary performance. This is exactly the problem with his poetry: it is usually occasional, always self-conscious, always mannered, always derivative. To quote Ben Jonson again (on Edmund Spenser), "[I]n affecting the ancients, [he] writ no language; yet I would have him read for his matter." Jumbled together in Santayana's collected poems are high-flown meditations, comic verses improvised for club meetings, Hudibrastic (or perhaps Oliver Wendell Holmesian) satire, and other nonce genres. He

was the amateur academic poet par excellence, the professor who could grind out the couplets, quatrains, or sonnets to suit the transient occasion or, in solitude, express mountainous thoughts in platitudinous language. Santayana really had no language of his own, so he borrowed whatever seemed handiest and most appropriate. The result is that his verses pose in affected attitudes like manikins fitted out from a costume closet.

In the same way, each time he undertook a new prose work, he took up a style that seemed to him appropriate to the task at handbut with happier results than in his poetry. Here the language is subordinate to the matter. Paul Valéry said the difference between poetry and prose is the difference between

dancing and walkingand Santayana's affected antics as a poet become, in prose, a variety of useful, agile, and attractive gaits that carry him wherever he needs to go.

But his friends and enemies alike tend to speak of his writings as if they were stylistically all of a piece, when in fact there is great variety. His first book, *The Sense of Beauty*, is an exhibit of late-nineteenth-century belletristics. "Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for usfor that moment only." Santayana at his early best? No: that is Walter Pater in the conclusion of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). Here is Santayana's ownat times, *fin-de-siècle*manner:

> When, however, we learn to apperceive; when we grow fond of tracing lines and developing vistas; when, above all, the subtler influences of places on our mental tone are transmuted into an expressiveness in those places, and they are furthermore poetized by our day-dreams, and turned by our instant fancy into so many hints of a fairyland of happy living and vague adventure,then we feel that the landscape is beautiful. (*Sense of Beauty* 83)

The opalesque glitter from within these linesthe stylistic iridescenceis another example of Santayana's protective coloration in his earlier writings. It is the stylistic parallel to the semantic camouflage with which he invests the word *progress* when he uses it. One thinks, too, of young Professor Santayana with his cape and beardthe genteel academic dandyism of his early years on the Harvard faculty.

A gradual evolution of style carried him through the five volumes of *The Life of Reason;* the landscape of his prose became a little more rugged and displayed a sparser efflorescence of verbal posies. In his middle years, he swung from the vigorous expository criticism of *Three Philosophical Poets* to the Hazlitt/Lamb manner of the informal essays in *Solioquies in England* and then back to the spirited excoriation of philosophical idealism in *Egotism in German Philosophy*. It is true that throughout these stylistic shiftings of fieldsome would say, tergiversationsthere is always evident an abiding gift for the gracefully turned figure of speech, for the deliciously suspended sentence. But there is definitely a shift in tone from one work to the otherand sometimes in genre as well, as in *Dialogues in Limbo* (which, though interesting, are like conversations counterfeited by a none-too-competent ventriloquist).

His one piece of fiction, *The Last Puritan*, borrows some of its tone and style, as well as its convincingly realistic fictional surface, from the American realists William Dean Howells and Henry James. His multivolume magnum opus, *Realms of Being*, mingles passages of great literary eloquence with a certain language, the understanding of which depends on a knowledge of Santayana's specialized vocabulary: *psyche, hypostasize, essence, trope, grammar, spirit, attention*all used in his particular ways. Here he makes his closest approach to the technical philosophy of our century.

So, before we begin to discuss Santayana's style, we have to realize we are talking about a multiplicity of genres and mannersa general literary facility, rather than a perfectly consistent medium. And we also must realize that just here is one of the problems in assessing his importance as a thinker. Can anyone who is so adaptable be quite reliable? May we not worry, as did Alfred North Whitehead, about Santayana's "sincerity"? May we not tend to dismiss him, as did Bertrand Russell, as "a man of letters" and nothing more? If we sometimes suffer when reading Santayana (and I do not, once I get the hang of his vocabulary), do we suffer in the same way as when we read Kant or Wittgenstein? Or is the relative lack of suffering (or even positive pleasure) proof of his insignificance as a philosopher?

My own answers to the preceding five questions are all in Santayana's favor. His use of style is another way of asserting the importance of one's essential humanity and, at the same time, the importance of accommodating one's own personality to the emergent occasion and to those whom one is addressing. We are

all well advised (in one of Samuel Johnson's many asides on human comportment) to take the tone of the company we find ourselves in, so long as it does no harm. It may well be that Santayana's inability to identify himself with any particular race, milieu, or moment left him just a trifle too insecure, but if I stigmatize him with a degree of affectedness, I also argue that if we understand a little about him, we find it easy to forgive his mannered performances. Once he is well launched into a particular work, the style does seem to become the man; it is shorter efforts, such as the *Soliloquies in England*, that show him donning and doffing his costumes too obviously. The larger inconsistencies of style (between entire books) might even recall Flaubert, among others: think of the difference in style between *Salammbô* and *Madame Bovary*or, for that matter, between *As You Like It* and *Othello*. I say this knowing that for many students of philosophy who aim at any sort of absolute, the citing of authors of works of fiction as points of comparison may actually tend to discredit Santayana.

Santayana's approach is deliberately literary. By doing philosophy this way,

he asserts the importance of what he called "literary psychology" and insists on our claims as human beings. Abandoned is the presumption of mathematical method and exactitude, the foundations for which were laid by Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza. The successive methodologies of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel are deliberately neglected (at the same time that the grounds of those methodologies are undermined). There is calculated inattention to the more crabbed, involved, and knottily self-referential symbologies of twentieth-century philosophy. Santayana, while never questioning the rigor of mathematics or the natural sciences, refused to pretend that the personal human equation does not matter, and he also refused to engage us in the search for a specious objectivity.

Implied in all his work from start to finish is the conviction that the particular slant, the coloration, the texture, that our humanity lends to our experience is, for our purposes, as important as anything else. Identity matters. Personality matters, he argues, and he has made his case all the more convincing by basing itnot on Bertrand Russell's Shelleyan diabolism (self-assertion amid unyielding despair)but on an uncompromising materialism and naturalism; on what he called, referring to the pre-Socratic philosophers, "Ionic piety"; on Spinoza and Lucretius; and on an unquestioning acceptance of the claims of true mathematics (as opposed to symbolic logic) and the natural sciences.

Santayana, then, is prepared to assert large claims on behalf of the specifically human and specifically personal point of view. At the same time, he qualified these claims by waging relentless warfare on those who would overstate the human point of view,

who would arrogate to an individual person, a race, a nation, or a species the righteousness of exercising sole authority, of sitting in the seat of judgment above the rest of the universe. So long as moral truth is held to be an absolute, rather than being recognized as a personal and relative equationas Santayana, following Spinoza, didthere will be irrational claimants to the title of possession of that one truth. Such claims may be asserted in entirely different ways. As an artist, one may insist on imposing uponor taking unto oneselfeverything upon which one's imagination operates. A logician may build systems that are faultlessly self-consistent but that bear reference to nothing outside themselves or that assume that no more than one point of view can be valid. A transcendental philosopher may argue that perceptions not only create what one perceives but that in perceiving oneself one has created oneself. Each form of assertion generates its own style when expressed in human language ranging from, say, Whitman ("Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / I am large, I contain multitudes") to Wittgenstein, for whom the personal equation simply disappears:

> 242. If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so.It is one thing to describe methods of measurement and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined be a certain consistency in results of measurement. (88)

Santayana set himself against all partialities, whatever form they might take. One partiality that he (probably wisely) touched on seldom, and then only indirectly, is the reigning prejudice among all varieties of extant beings in favor of existence itself. One can hardly bring this up without appearing to be making jokes or indulging in paradoxes, if not in outright foolishness; but just as we are born to a country, a race, usually to a religion, often to a political affiliation, so we are born to our very existence. We do not, however, expect to exist forever, unless we believe the promises of a continuation or an improved version of existence that we are offered by various religions. Existence may not be forever. But *nonexistence* is. We must abandon our prejudice against this condition to enter the realm of essence. Some of our best friends are nonexistent. Essences, as understood by Santayana, are nonexistent. We may visit that realm at any time, since it is the given, the eternally presentthough nonexistent.

> Not only is the character of each essence inalienable, and, so long as it is open to intuition, indubitable, but the realm of essences is infinite. Since any essence I happen to have hit upon is independent of me and would possess its precise character if I had never been born, or had never been led by the circumstances of my life and temperament to apprehend that particular essence, evidently all other essences, which I have not led to think of, rejoice in the same

> sort of impalpable beingimpalpable, yet the only sort of being that the most rugged experience can ever actually find. Thus a mind enlightened by scepticism and cured of noisy dogma, a mind discounting all reports, and free from all tormenting anxiety about its own fortunes, finds in the wilderness of essence a very sweet and marvelous solitude. The ultimate reaches of doubt and renunciation open out for it, by an easy transition, into fields of endless variety and peace, as if through the gorges of death it had passed into a paradise where all things are crystallised into the image of themselves, and have lost their urgency and their venom. (*Scepticism and Animal Faith* 76)

The way that he puts it here may sound a bit solipsistic; elsewhere he speaks of "the friendly essences" or "a goodly company" instead of dwelling on the "very sweet and marvelous solitude." We may be sure that he did happily welcome

other subsisting entities into this paradise and that it is always available to us as well as to him. The emphasis on nonexistence is, however, important. Ordinary reflections about existence are so conditioned by existence that the assumption is made that nonexistence is itself an evil. Orthodox Christian views of evil incorporate this prejudice. A fine and moving poem by a devout Christian ("Eros," by Helen Pinkerton) contains the lines: "Evil is not what is / But is its absence, raised to an absolute." Aquinas argued that demons are good, insofar as they exist, but evil to the extent that their existence is incomplete, and that it was God's essence to exist. So nonexistence is attributed to the Other Team.

The snake speaking in Paul Valéry's poem "Ébauche d'un Serpent" rebukes the sun for producing the illusion of existence:

> Tu gardes les coeurs de connaître
> Que l'univers n'est qu'un défaut
> Dans la pureté du Non-être!
>
> [You keep our hearts from knowing that the universe is nothing but a defect in the purity of nonbeing!]

Here it is the serpent speaking, but the phrase also appeared in one of the poet's notebooks, where he speaks in his own person. Even the serpent, with his elusive sibilance, gives voice to the willful self-deception of the intellect through which it tricks itself into the truth. Santayana, at any rate, found in this poem an exact formula for his realm of essence, the purity of nonbeing. Remembering Valéry's lines as I read Santayana, I was surprised to discover them in a footnote to the postscript to *The Realm of Essence;* the lines, and even the poem's title, are slightly misquoted, but their *essential* aptness had not escaped Santayana.

To return to the question of Santayana's style: What connection does his virtuosity as a stylist have to do with his theory of essence? Why should the nonexistence of essences have any bearing on the way that he writes? I will recapitulate both his theory and what I take to be his personal proclivity toward such a view in a later chapter, but it may be well to raise these questions even at the outset.

To answer indirectly, one might begin by nothing that the idea that a writer must achieve a stylistic definition that is distinctly and consistently personal is a romantic notion. In American literary criticism, especially as it deals with poetry, the word used is *voice*, with Whitman the preeminent example. Style, or voice, in this case becomes a projection of the writer's personalitynot a literary means of accommodating a subject. The imposition of personality through

style may vitiate the substance by asserting inordinate claims. A flexible and accommodative style, however, can adapt itself to the multifarious qualities of its subjects. In a cruder form, this was one of the assumptions of medieval rhetoric, when it spoke of high, low, and middle styles. In Aristotle's rhetoric there is constant attention to the need to modify speech to suit the occasion, the subject, and the audience. Santayana, thenas in many other aspects of his writingis harking back to a world whose values have not been battered by the threefold wave of Reformation, Romanticism, and German transcendentalismnot to speak of any improper claims of logic, mathematics, or the natural sciences. It is a world that was more hospitable to multiple viewpoints, more tolerant of the older godsa world that is willing to assimilate local divinities and turn them into saints. In such a world, the contemplative life is not scornednor supplanted by casual mysticisms. In such a world, one's personal style is often borrowed from one's company.

Style, conceived in this way, is cosmopolitan, urbane, accommodative, and assimilative. It is a concession to, and a recognition of, the legitimacy of a multiplicity of points of viewnot an effort at imposing one single, possibly barbaric, transcendental ego. A satirical epigraph added, not by Santayana, to the French translation of *Egotism in German Philosophy* epitomizes the metaphysical bad manners against which his own manner contends: "Je suis; donc tu n'es pas." Style, as an assertion of personal existence, is presumptuous, overbearing, egotistical. Style, as an admission of the infinitude made possible by nonexistence (or in more familiar and more acceptable language, by the recognition that we are all mortal creatures), is

accommodative, friendly, flexible. And yet Santayana's concept and practice of style remains, simultaneously, a way of asserting the legitimacy of a characteristically human point of view, with its weakness and fallibility as well as its grandeur.

Much labor expended in the service of philosophy, especially in this century, has aimed at the elimination of resonances and ambiguities and has presupposed inhuman impersonality as a guarantee of authenticity and clarity of thought. Models for this enterprisebeginning with Bacon's iconoclastic prescriptions for demolishing various idols and Descartes's reductive epistemologyhave been mathematics and, more important in this century, mathematical physics. The lonely investigator or theoretician laborsdisbelieved, contradicted, misunderstooduntil the rigor of one's argument and a weight of accumulating evidence or constrained agreement proves one right. The retrospective reverence accorded Einstein, Planck, and Bohr is appropriated to contemporary logicians, the difficulty of whose arguments seems convincingly similar to the equations of relativity or quantum mechanics. Genuine physi-

cists, of course, know the difference; an anecdote about Niels Bohr has him protesting, "You are not thinking; you are merely being logical!" But in much twentieth-century philosophy, which has taken on the aspect of the later stages of medieval Scholasticism, investigations are limited to questions of meaning, language, and logical implication. Occam's razor eliminates superfluous entities as the guillotine eliminated some French aristocrats.

Elimination of superfluous entities can extend even beyond the operations of logic itself. Norman Malcolm's memoir of Wittgenstein describes one aspect of his visit to Cornell in 1949: "My wife once gave him some Swiss cheese and rye bread for lunch, which he greatly liked. Thereafter he would more or less insist on eating bread and cheese at all meals, largely ignoring the various dishes that my wife prepared. Wittgenstein declared that it did not much matter to him *what* he ate, so long as it was always the *same*" (qtd. in Ayer 15). Bread and cheese provides most of what is needed for the continuation of bodily existence. To change the metaphor, damping out of harmonic overtones in discourse leaves the pure meaning; this is valuable in discovering fundamental harmonies. But as a critique of human experience, it is a symphony played on tuning forks. Santayana's philosophy insists that the complexities introduced by multiple points of view, multiple experiences, do matter and that for human beings human concerns cannot be eliminated without impoverishing the philosophy. Even among logicians, there are voices such as Hao Wang's that speak of this:

> The excessive emphasis on formal systems seems unwarranted. The prize example of formalizing the intuitive concept of a mathematical

procedure is not accomplished by using formal systems. . . .

As to the more general impact of mathematical logic on philosophy, even if we leave out the question whether the impact was good, the fact that Frege, Russell, and early Wittgenstein did have great influence may reasonably be accounted for by the particular context they were in. There is no good reason to infer that at the present stage mathematical logic will, except through inertia, continue to be central to philosophy. It is hard to predict how Ramsey might have developed, had he lived longer. Certainly the later Wittgenstein thought that mathematical logic was a bad influence both in philosophy and in mathematics. (*From Mathematics to Philosophy* 57)

One common feature of Carnap's and Quine's philosophical practice is their preoccupation with local (and mostly formal) precision accompanied by a surprising willingness to tolerate or even celebrate global indefiniteness. They differ in that Carnap tries (unsuccessfully) to map out larger

> localities. The appeal of their practice is undoubtedly connected with the predominance and relative success of specialization in the sciences. But I am sufficiently old-fashioned to believe that a major concern of philosophy remains the task of achieving some measure of global definiteness. (*Beyond Analytic Philosophy* 1)
>
> Mathematical logic has for many years been intricately connected with academic philosophy. In the earlier development of mathematical logic, concern with traditional philosophical problems had stimulated advances. But the effect of mathematical logic on academic philosophy seems to have mainly been the provision of an additional excuse for moving away from real and complex questions having to do with man and nature. (*Popular Lectures on Mathematical Logic* 3)

Santayana, without confronting the logical positivists directly, has set an example of another, literary, method. He refused to call himself a metaphysicianbecause he knew that to do so would be to open himself to ridicule and peremptory dismissal. Karl Pearson, who was almost his exact contemporary, and a radical positivist, wrote something that has been echoed in various ways by others: "The poet is a valued member of the community, for he is known as a poet. . . . The metaphysician is a poet, often a very great one, but unfortunately he is not known to be a poet, because he strives to clothe his poetry in the language of reason, and hence it follows that he is liable to be a dangerous member of the community" (qtd. in Copleston 11516). To this Spartan outlook, Santayana opposed his Athenian (and Ionic) temperament.

The culmination of Santayana's literary method was *The Last Puritan*, and I will treat it as a major contribution to his life's

work rather than as a sort of pastime. Indeed, one wishes that he had cultivated that mode earlier in his life. Even W. H. Auden, whose hostile and contemptuous remarks I quote later, enjoyed that book. Those who insist that philosophical discourse exhibit a dead-serious, though often sardonic, logical consistency will continue to regard his method as unworthy of the profession. But they should remind themselves that both authors of the *Principia Mathematica*, at least at times, took Santayana seriously. They might also examine "Postscript: Corroborations in Current Opinion," which is appended to *The Realm of Essence*. Here they will see Santayana discovering similarities between his position and those of Whitehead, Husserl, and Guénon who were, respectively, a logician, a phenomenologist, and an interpreter of Indian philosophy. James and Russellat different times and decades apartcalled Santayana a Scholastic; neither intended a compliment, but Santayana took it as such and gladly acceded to this denomination. His most ambitious intention was to refashion (in *Realms of Being*) a synthesis of philoso-

phy and religion, making possible a new orthodoxy in which various opposing dyadsspirit and flesh, science and the artscould once again flourish in peace. But before any mutual hospitality was possible, unreasonable claims would have to be abandoned on all sides.

Santayana aimed at a restored and improved catholicity, where excesses of self-abnegation and self-righteousness would be purged by a frank recognition that our spiritual life is grounded in our animal nature and is continuous with it. The bedrock of his edifice is Spinozan naturalism, but the vaults overhead are luminous with the essence of pure beinga Neoplatonic effulgence clarified of any residual taint of existence.

He cultivated a highly literary form of philosophy because it is through religion and the artsthrough literaturethat we express and share those ideals that are characteristic of our own species. We are spiritual beings as well as material organisms, and we establish our identities partly with the help of these graceful artifacts (poems, paintings, symphonies, cathedralsand religions) in which we delight. "Logic," wrote Susanne K. Langer, "does not deal with specific men or animals; it can *apply* to individuals if they are members of a class, but it can actually *mention* them only as members, not as individuals" (113). Santayana's panoply of styles is an assertion of the human presence, a way of entering as a human being into philosophical discourse and thereby asserting the value of personality, of the human perspective.

2
Some Sources of Santayana's Philosophy

An account of Santayana's connections with other literary figures, particularly with poets, in this century would itself be a work of some complexity. Many people are aware that T. S. Eliot took courses from himbut how many know that Wallace Stevens bought all of the philosopher's books as they came out and annotated them? Also, that Ezra Pound tried to enlist Santayana, along with Eliot, in one his schemes to reform civilization, and the young Robert Lowell went chasing after him by mail and in person and found much consolation in his avuncular affection? Other men and women of letters sought him out at times; Edmund Wilson's remarks on Santayana sound awestruck, a tone that he took toward only one other living figure, James Joyce. More than any other figure in philosophy, Santayana also made himself at home with the great poets of ages pastGoethe, Milton, Shakespeare, Dante, Virgil, Lucretius, Homer.

If Santayana's name appears prominently in literary relations, imagine the complexity of connections within his own discipline. The names in a diagram of these relations would include: Thales, Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Democritus, Epicurus, Marcus Aurelius, Lucretius, Augustine, Aquinas, Maimonides, Avicenna, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Emerson, Fichte, Nietzsche, Bergson, Moore, James, Royce, Russell, and Whitehead. One could mention many othersfor example, Lotze, on whom Santayana did his dissertation, and various teachers at Harvard,

Berlin, and Cambridge. And all these would appear, not as topics discussed by Santayana, but as points of view that he had considered, modified, and assimilated into his own outlook. He was catholic, as well as a skeptic, in the fullest sense of the word.

Most of Santayana's philosophical lineage has been traced adequatelywith one egregious exception, and that is his relation to Spinoza. It may be that his lineal descent from Spinoza seems too obvious to require commentary, but for some reason, it has received little explicit attention. The best general

treatment of his thought is by Timothy Sprigge. In *Santayana: An Examination of His Philosophy*, Sprigge takes on Santayana's ideas directly, dealing with them in his and Santayana's own terms rather than historically, though he incidentally supplies many valuable historical connections or frames of reference. John McCormick's biography includes excellent passages detailing the intellectual history of Santayana's concepts, as does the much earlier work by George W. Howgate, a work somewhat marred by Howgate's well-meaning attempt at treating Santayana as an important poet. Even Richard Butler's often-scorned study *The Mind of Santayana* offers useful summaries of what went into the making of the philosophy, though Butler went radically wrong in his diabolical discovery of Kantian transcendentalism therein. Butler also was capable of a complacent sanctimoniousness, as in his remarkastonishing because he was sixty years junior to Santayana"I was his spiritual father, anxious to help a lost child find his way home" (viii). There are also numerous more specialized studies, in particular of Santayana's aesthetics, such as those of Irving Singer and Willard Arnett. But much to my surprise, in light of Santayana's own frequent and reverent references to Spinoza, little attention has been paid in any of the studies I have seen to the fundamental importance of Spinoza in Santayana's mind.

In the following chapter, I will argue the radical Spinozism of Santayana's philosophy. My purpose here is to show how he absorbed other lines of thought into his own. This may seem to put the cart before the horse, or to build downward from the spires to the foundation of his philosophy; but because my extreme emphasis on Spinoza is unusual in treatments of

Santayana, it is best to allow credit initially to all those other, more frequently noticed sources.

Because Santayana's philosophy is eclectic and assimilative, it lends itself ideally to the approach exemplified in A. O. Lovejoy's *Great Chain of Being*: the tracing of the history of ideas. Essences might be for Santayana eternal and nonexistent, but he saw his own life and development as a philosopher as one intricate trope. The give-and-take of the extant world, including the world of philosophical discourse, provided the grounds of existence for his thought, even as matter itself gave birth to spirit. This very reasonableness and accommodativeness explains why his writings lent themselves to controversy and attack. The words of Jesus, "Ye who are not for me are against me," seem explicitly to rebuke Santayana; there are many who find him neither warm nor cold, and who also detect some flavor not to their liking, and who therefore spew him out of their mouths. A more useful approach is to try to discern just whose views he accommodated to his own and how.

William James and British Empiricism

Santayana felt his philosophy as an expression of human nature; for him, the personalities of those he learned from were as important as the technical side of their philosophy. Among these, William James's loomed larger than any other, partly because one of the most important things that Santayana learned from him was exactly that: the personality of the philosopher does matter. It is both surprising and not surprising to observe how much Santayana borrowed from James: surprising because of his detailed criticisms of his mentor, which would seem to argue that he had escaped James's influence; not surprising because of the long tutelage under James and their many years together as colleagues.

There were, certainly, radical differences between the twoof personality as well as philosophy. James did not feel Santayana's acute sense of the separation required to preserve individual identity. To say this may seem strange, since we think of James as one who respected and cherished extreme individualism and even abnormal points of view. But James himself was so completely at ease at Harvard and in Boston that there was little to make him feel his own limitations: moving from academic department to department as his interests carried him in new directions; born to such wealth as to make him feel assured and independent even when, later, he felt the occasional pinch of financial exigencies; beloved of everyone; hailed worldwide as a pioneer, first in psychology, then in philosophy. Few human beings have ever beenwhen they reached middle ageas thoroughly *secure* as William James. Santayana thought

otherwise, saying that "There was a deep sense of insecurity in him; a mixture of humility with romanticism" (*Character and Opinion* 66), but we may interpret this as meaning that James was insecure in his philosophy, not in his person. In person, he could well afford to sympathize with misfits, enthusiasts, and outright cranks. It was a happy accident for Santayana that James viewed him as such an oddity, though Santayana did not enjoy it, complaining that he was, in James's mind, some kind of manikin whom Santayana could not recognize. The consequence for James, of moving without opposition or impediment through perfectly familiar circumstances, was that the world presented itself to him as one in which the stream of consciousness spread itself around in a happy flux, a river of experience, or rather an ocean, which enveloped the objects of its attention. He seems not to have realized that this view was a projection of his own happy and prosperous circumstances. Santayana at every point felt his *apartness*, and observation convinced him that this was the more valid and valuable description of consciousness.

Typical also of James was a stress on the relations and activities between the transitory agglomerations in that vast stream of existence; a particular *thing* was not self-contained, but was an entity because of its relations with other things. Santayana, however, felt that separateness from other things defined an entity; he distrusted the notion of the mystical relations of one thing to another, and he distrusted intimacy of any sort.

But when James talks about awareness or consciousness, he uses a term that one finds everywhere in Santayana's writings: *attention*. The two philosophers seem to have shared the idea that the individual organism, psyche, or animal is capable of directing its interest in a particular direction. This is not an absolute or distinctive gift of human nature but rather one of the features exhibited by an entity that had achieved the power of locomotion and an additional degree of nervous organization. Indeed, to the extent that James was a reliable observational psychologist, noting the habits of animals, including human beings, Santayana could find in him a means of connecting what appeared to be transcendental experience of the self-existing spirit with what we ordinarily call lower forms of life, thereby puncturing its pretensions to absolute autonomy. The trouble, for Santayana, with James's idea of *attention* was that James thought that attention created, at least in part, the thing observed, rather than being simply a manifestation of organized matter's being affected by or drawn to something outside itself. It was the drift in this direction that led Bertrand Russell to speak of James's work as "only a form of the subjectivistic madness which is characteristic of most modern philosophy" (*History* 818).

Santayana did agree with James that we have no right to take for granted that anything exists outside our own consciousness. This is the undeniable argument of the transcendental philosopher; this is the inevitable "solipsism of the present moment," as Santayana called it. James would have us proceed by willing into existence what we need; he would have us make our ideas into realities. We should plunge boldly ahead, immerse ourselves in the sea of existence, swim as hard as we can, and not worry about what is holding us up, since for our purposes it does not matter. Santayana goes in precisely the other direction. We cannot prove anything, but we can accept what we seem to find by falling back on animal faith. Matter is omnipotent and irrational, but we can duck when the stone comes at our heads and take on faith that it will continue on its shallow parabolic trajectory, missing us.

Santayana seems to owe to, or at least to share with, James a friendly awareness of the existence of multiple centers of consciousness in the universe. James and Santayana both display a highly developed sense of fair play. James carried

sportsmanship to cosmic extremes with hisfrom Santayana's point of view, grotesquely overdevelopedsympathy for oddballs, for whom James felt a warm comradeship; he enjoyed a sense of shared purpose not only with humankind, but also with God, whom he was quite happy to welcomeon equal termsas one of the team. Santayana appreciated the variety of the human animal almost to the degree James did, and he displayed great fondness and a great capacity for friendship toward it, but he could not feel that we are all engaged in a common struggle, and he could not bring himself to view human interests as the only important thing in the universe. This distinguishes him sharply from all the pragmatists who, he thought, did very well with the great middle ground of communal human interests but who ignored the destinies of, in one direction, the vastness of galactic space and all its possible inhabitants, and in the other direction, the tragicomedy of individual human existence on this earth.

It is odd to discover Santayana's belief that James had supplied the source for his own theory of essences in the course of a lecture on Herbert Spencer, in which James was showing up Spencer as a transcendentalist masquerading as a materialist:

> James was characteristically masculine and empirical in his wrath at the "scandalous vagueness" of Spencer's ideas. For instance, what did it mean to say that things passed from the indefinite to the definite? Nothing can be indefinite. Make a blot of ink at random on a piece of paper. The spot is not indefinite: it has precisely the outline that it has. (*Persons and Places* 242)

At this point, Santayana appends a footnote: "Here was a hint of my 'essences' given by an unintended shot, that hit the bull's-eye

without seeing it. Forms are infinite in multitude and each perfectly concrete. James's radical empiricism was undoubtedly a guide to me in this matter. Also Berkeley's nominalism." Many years' contemplation of Santayana's theory of essences does not make it any easier to swallow that word *concrete*, onto which one bites down with a sensation like a fragile tooth on an olive pit. But, as the agony is abated, one sees that he means only to insist, at this late date, on the perfect definiteness of each intuited essence, or quality; *concrete* here is very far from meaning *material*, however hard it may be, particularly for those who have actually poured concrete, to accept the word as designating something nonexistent and immaterial. James, without meaning to do so, showed Santayana how to focus attention, how to avail himself of the resources of radical empiricism, so as to discover the

immediate and undeniable qualities, the essences. "Nothing can be indefinite" meant, to Santayana, that matter always wears perfectly definite essences.

Other comments and asidesin the classroom or in printcontained hints from which Santayana developed his own theories. With regard to the concept of essence, we find James writing: "The bottom of Being is left logically opaque to us, a *datum* in the strict sense of the word, something which we simply come upon and find, and about which (if we wish to act) we should pause and wonder as little as possible." The difference between Santayana and James is in the pausing and the wonderingbetween the contemplative and the active. James continued:

> In this confession lies the lasting truth of Empiricism, and in it Empiricism and imaginative Faith join hands. The logical attitude of both is identical, they both say there is a *plus ultra* beyond all we know, a womb of unimagined other possibility. They only differ in their sentimental temper: Empiricism says, "Into the *plus ultra* you have no right to carry your anthropomorphic affirmations"; Faith says, "You have no right to extend to it your denials." (*Collected Essays and Reviews* 128)

The "womb of unimagined other possibility" sounds somewhat like Santayana's realm of essence, though essence, for Santayana, was never tinged with the faintest hue of actuality or potentiality.

Santayana, however, was more in agreement with James about empiricism, although he felt that the empiricists had already carried their "anthropomorphic affirmations" rather far into their investigations. In discussing the course in English philosophy

that he took from James, Santayana admits that neither James himselfhowever hearty and friendly his approachnor Santayana, when he later taught the same course, could extract much of value from Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. He sums the British views up as "literary and autobiographical," meaning that they allowed their prejudices and predilections to guide them, mistaking their inner preferences for empirical truths. Others did not think that Santayana was free of their influence; George Herbert Palmer told him that he had Hume in his bones (*Persons and Places* 238). Palmer was correct in realizing that the entire English outlook was so sympathetic to Santayana that he could not recognize how much he had taken from these thinkers. I see in Santayana a good-natured and fair-minded appreciation of the individual point of view, an antidote both to the inhumanity of extreme Spinozism and to Germanic transcendental egotism; this, I think, he owed both to William James and to the empiricists.

Consciously, however, Santayana rejected the British empiricists and idealists as "A monstrous trick of verbal legerdemain, a sophistical curiosity." And he goes on:

> The only solid foundation for all my play with this subject was supplied by the sturdy but undeveloped materialism of Hobbes, powerfully supported by the psychology of Spinoza and insecurely by the early medical psychology of James: to which in Germany my passing enthusiasm for Schopenhauer may be added, because by that time I was able to discount the language of a system and perceive from what direction it drew its inspiration. The "Will" in Schopenhauer was a transparent mythological symbol for the flux of matter. There was absolute equivalence between such a system, in its purport and sense for reality, and the systems of Spinoza and Lucretius. (*Persons and Places* 248)

The "early medical psychology of James" shows itself, for example, in *The Sense of Beauty*:

> The human body is a machine that holds together by virtue of certain vital functions, on the cessation of which it is dissolved. Some of these, like the circulation of the blood, the growth and decay of the tissues, are at first sight unconscious. Yet any important disturbance of these fundamental processes at once produces great and painful changes in consciousness. . . .
>
> The Aesthetic value of vital functions differs according to their physiological concomitants: those that are favorable to ideation are of course more apt to extend something of their intimate warmth to the pleasures of contemplation, and thus to intensify the sense of beauty and the interest of thought. (5455)

When he returned to aesthetic questions in *Reason in Art*, we find him employing a vocabulary that sounds like James, the

clinical enthusiast: "The difference flows from the greater or lesser affinity that happens to exist between expectation and instinct. Action remains always, in its initial phase, spontaneous and automatic; it retains an inwardly grounded and perfectly blind tendency of its own" (34).

Lucretius

William James provided Santayana with someone to react against, philosophically as well as personally, and someone to reject. For a father figure to

imitate, he went back to antiquityand to the shores of the Mediterranean: "The great master of sympathy with nature, in my education, was Lucretius" (*My Host the World* 134).

> I read Lucretius in a pocket edition without notes. . . . I couldn't properly understand the text, many a word was new to me, and I had to pass on, reading as I did at odd moments or in horse cars. But the general drift was obvious, and I learned great passages by heart. Even the physical and biological theories seemed instructive, not as scientific finalities, if science could be final, but as serving to dispel the notion that anything is nonnatural or miraculous. (*Persons and Places* 239)

He also argued that Lucretius's use of the gods is to give names to various natural forces, not to invoke them as personalities; and he makes clear that his feeling for the vitality of the material flux of the universe originated in his reading of *De Rerum Natura*. "I recited my Lucretius with as much gusto as my Saint Augustine; and gradually Lucretius sank deeper and became more satisfying" ("General Confession" 24).

He often mentions Lucretius in the same breath with Spinoza, and I will trace this twinned attribution in the next chapter. The sense of pathos and tragedy, as well as magnificence, in the majestic progress of the universe is something Lucretius supplies that one misses in Spinoza. Where Spinoza staggered with joyful inebriation at the prospect, "Yet this joyful procreation of things is also tragic, because as Lucretius says, nothing is born save by the death of something else" (*Realm of Truth* 111). And in the introduction to *The Realm of Matter*, he says, "If any poet ever felt the life of nature in its truth, irrepressible, many-sided, here

flaming up savagely, there helplessly dying down, that poet was Lucretius, whose materialism was unqualified" (x).

Schopenhauer

One gets the impression, through Santayana, that Josiah Royce thought he was rescuing his pupil from a bad influence when he prevailed upon him not to write on Schopenhauer, or at least that he was sparing him the humiliation of having paid too much attention to a minor figure. Because of Santayana's emphasis on reasonableness, it does seem strange that he should ever have been infatuated with the writings of that ill-tempered and egotistical misogynist, but Santayana did manage to find uses for him. To start with, there was Schopenhauer's reverence for Indian philosophy, which Santayana also admiredfrom

a distance, feeling it out of reach ("up on the top shelf," he puts it). Then, as he explains in *Egotism in German Philosophy*,

> The transcendentalism of Schopenhauer, sweeping as it was in its way, retained the modest and agnostic character that it had in Kant: he proclaimed that the world was his idea, but meant only (what is undeniable) that his *idea* of the world was his idea. The egotistical doctrine that the whole universe is but the image of it created by the mind disappeared altogether in his system. . . .
>
> . . . The consequences of this change were important. . . . The pocket universe of Hegel opened out to the stars, so hateful to that philosopher. Man lost his importance and at the same time the insufferable burden of his false pretensions. . . .
>
> . . . Schopenhauer was led into his pessimism also by the spirit of opposition; his righteous wrath was aroused by the sardonic and inhuman optimism of Hegel, the arguments for which were so cogent, so Calvinistic, and so irrelevant that they would have lost none of their force if they had been proposed in hell. (9296)

So Santayana could see in Schopenhauer an authority for his concept of matter; a fundamental reverence for the cosmic process and for those who also paid it homage; and a sort of helpful fifth-columnist in the enemy territory of German transcendentalism. As a young man, too, he must have found appealing Schopenhauer's passionate interest in the arts; it was another antidote, or palliative, to the bitter medicine of Spinozism. Schopenhauer's power and charm as a literary stylist also set an example that Santayana emulated; he showed that it was possible to conduct philosophical discourse without entering into Kantian obfuscations or attempting the geometrical rigor sought by Descartes and Spinoza.

And yet one continues to marvel that anything about Schopenhauer could have appealed to Santayana. Appeal there surely was: in *Egotism in German Philosophy*, he refers to Schopenhauer with favor, remarking that there was "at least one gentleman" in the group. This anomaly is a little like his weakness for Byronic figures: Schopenhauer, like Byron, pushed certain romantic attitudes to such an extreme that they become absolute poles of human possibilities. Byronic posturing and Schopenhauer's studied self-centeredness are paradigms of that side of human nature that is irredeemably self-centered and selfishbut that does not, at the same time, desire the extinction of other similarly selfish centers of awareness.

Such explanations, however, are not satisfying and are difficult even to articulate clearly. Santayana's attraction to Byron and Schopenhauer remains one

of the mysteries and paradoxes of his own personality; one would expect his own principles to set him against both.

Plato

Those who sniff out Santayana from a distance, reading a few sentences in a reference book regarding his theory of essences, think that they have caught the spoor of a Platonist, and with facile phrases categorize him as such. They are not so far wrong. Platonism effected a more profound transformation of his fundamental materialism than did any other set of doctrines but not for a long time: "Dialectic didn't show its other, its honest, side to me until many years later, when I read Plato and knew Bertie Russell" (*Persons and Places* 247). "Of the Greeks, however, I knew very little: the philosophical and political departments at Harvard had not yet discovered Plato and Aristotle." ("General Confession" 13). So, in 1886 he took action to remedy this deficiency, applying for an unpaid leave to go read Plato under Henry Jackson of Trinity College, Cambridge. " [B]y that study and change of scene my mind was greatly enriched; and the composition of *The Life of Reason* was the consequence."

The discussion of essence further on in this book will bring us back to Plato; only a few points need be made here. To begin with, the very elevation of Platonism appealed to him, since it was quite in keeping with his natural detachment and fastidiousness, not to say, as some would, snobbishness. He must have done some reading on his own prior to the more intense study at Cambridge University, because early in *The Sense of Beauty* he says, "Platonism is a very refined and beautiful

expression of our natural instincts, it embodies conscience and utters our inmost hopes. Platonic philosophers have therefore a natural authority, as standing on heights to which the vulgar cannot attain, but to which they naturally and half-consciously aspire" (9). This contains the germs, not only of his own theory of essence, but also his criticism of Platonic ideas as the mythologizing of natural objects. That he was already moving in these directions is evident here:

> Shall we take the Platonic myth literally, and say the idea is a memory of the tree I have already seen in heaven? How else establish any relation between that eternal object and the type in my mind? But why, in that case, this infinite variability of ideal trees? Was the Tree Beautiful an oak, or a cedar, an English or an American elm? My actual types are finite and mutually exclusive; that heavenly type must be one and infinite. The problem is hopeless. (117)

So even before immersing himself in Plato, he was beginning to resent the improper authority that he felt implicit, the causative role of Platonic forms. The breadth of Santayana's experience, the extent of his own travels, militated against the limitation and stasis of ideal forms. Santayana had seen enough kinds of trees in his life to be suspicious about Ideal Trees; and he had garnered from Lucretius, as well as from his own experience, a feeling for the endless fertility of nature.

One should also note his invention here of the phrase "eternal object" to denote Platonic form, anticipating by several decades Whitehead's use of the expression, which is quite close to Santayana's *essence*.

When he writes of *love*, however, in *Reason in Society*, he sounds exactly like a Renaissance courtier sporting his new-found Platonism fresh from the Italian philosophical looms.

> Not to believe in love is a great sign of dullness. There are some people so indirect and lumbering that they think all real affection must rest on circumstantial evidence. But a finely constituted being is sensitive in its deepest affinities. . . . Fine senses vibrate at once to harmonies which it may take long to verify. . . .
>
> . . . That the true object is no natural being, but an ideal form essentially eternal and capable of endless embodiments, is far from abolishing its worth; on the contrary, this fact makes love ideally relevant to generation, by which the human soul and body may be for ever renewed, and at the same time makes it a thing for large thoughts to be focused upon, a thing representing all rational aims. (27, 31)

The critical Santayana reappears in *Reason in Art*, where the

subject demands that he defend poetry against its most celebrated enemy.

> This reasoning has been little understood, because Platonists so soon lost sight of their master's Socratic habit and moral intent. They turned the good into an existence, making it thereby unmeaning. Plato's dialectic, if we do not thus abolish the force of its terms, is perfectly cogent: representative art has indeed no utility, and, if the good has been identified with efficiency in a military state, it can have no justification. Plato's Republic was avowedly a fallen state, a church militant, coming sadly short of perfection; and the joy which Plato as much as anyone could feel in sensuous art he postponed, as a man in mourning might, until life should be redeemed from baseness. . . .
>
> . . . Never have art and beauty received a more glowing eulogy than is implied in Plato's censure. (17677)

Here we see Santayana using one point of view as a corrective for another, supplying the deficiencies of one philosophy by assimilating a feature of another, affirming and then criticizing. His enemies call this eclectic, derivative, and insincere. Others might find it rationala kind of metaphysical Confucianism, that is, making a habit of observing the best and the worst in one's companions, imitating the former and avoiding the latter. Or, to use a more homely English expression, he applies the wisdom in Chaucer's lines, "Whoso will not be ware by other men, / By him shall other men corrected be," correcting himself by observing other philosophers.

An important footnote appears on page 30 of *Reason in Science*, in which the extent to which he had meditated on the *Parmenides*, a chief object of his study under Jackson, becomes evident. Here Santayana argues that truth itself is an essence, and therefore "truth is no existence." The famous argument in that dialogue, in which the young Socrates is somewhat shaken by the suggestion that there are forms of dirt, hair, and so on, as well as of higher things, also convinced Santayana that the realm of essence went far beyond those forms that seemed to subserve human interests; that the essences were infinite and democratic. He used Plato to criticize Plato.

In the essay "The Human Scale," one of his "soliloquies," he made clear what he took to be the fundamental error of Platonism:

> Scarcely had Socrates brought investigation down from the heavens and limited it to moralsa realm essentially on the human scalewhen his pupils hastened to undo his work by projecting their moral

> system again into the sky, denaturalizing both morals and nature. They imagined a universe circling about man, tempering the light for his eyes and making absolute his childlike wishes and judgements. (*Soliloquies in England* 76)

In *The Realm of Essence,* he states it plainly: "In the realm of essence as I conceive it, the sphere of Socratic Ideas is infinitely extended and freed from all confusion with natural forces" (155). And yet there certainly is enough of Plato in this concept to make it understandable why some people continue to call this Platonism: "Geometrical figures, fixed by intent, are certainly essences; so too are any types of animal bodies or human institutions which may be arrested in thought," says Santayana, and then: "but so also are all the qualities of sensation despised by Platonism and all types of change or relation neglected by that philosophy" (30). He veers away from Platonism and then makes another close approach, as when he says "Tropes, mathematical or vital, mechanical or historical, all belong to the region of Platonic Ideas" (*Realm of Matter* 113).

In *Platonism and the Spiritual Life,* he treats some of these notions at greater

length, spelling out just how, according to Platonic doctrine, the forms of the good, even God himself, actually exist and exercise a power over matter. "The Platonic system is mythological" (237) was a phrase he never tired of using. Whenever Santayana speaks of beauty or of Pure Being, we hear melodies or chords struck by Plato, or by the Neoplatonists. There are chapters in *The Realm of Essence* and, of course, many passages in *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* in which we detect these strains.

Yet there is a way in which Santayana's entire vision of his various realms can be explained as an inversion of Neoplatonic doctrine. In Neoplatonism, matter is the most distant, passive, gross, and even evil emanationthe lowest in the gradations of beinginto which the soul lapses and from which it aspires to escape. For Santayana, there is nothing evil in mattermerely an endless flux out of which spirit is born. Just as Marx upended Hegel, so Santayana found Neoplatonism with its seamy side out; so he reversed it.

Aristotle

Aristotle's tripartite arrangement (of the vegetable, animal, and rational souls) was never far from Santayana's mind when he spoke of the *psyche*. Like most of us, he found the solidity of that marine biologist's outlook reassuring and the breadth of his interests inspiring. Tags from Aristotle embellish many a passage in his writings; for instance, in *The Sense of Beauty*, a paragraph leads off casually with the phrase "But man is preeminently a political animal" (64). A playfully odd adaptation of Aristotelian ethics to aesthetic theory appears later in the same work: "The beautiful horse, the beautiful face, is always a medium between

the extremes which our experience has offered" (120). Further on, we find an interesting amalgam of Aristotle with Spinoza, in what is clearly a reference to the *conatus* of the latter:

> What is called the principle of self-preservation, and the final causes and substantial forms of the Aristotelian philosophy, are descriptions of the result of this operation. The tendency of everything to maintain and propagate its nature is simply the inertia of a stable juxtaposition of elements, which are not enough disturbed by ordinary accidents to lose their equilibrium. (156)

So, he is equating Aristotle's notion of forms embodied in natural objects with his own concept of the psyche, which in turn owed much to the Spinozan *conatus*, or tendency toward self-perpetuation. He found this concept perfectly satisfactory to the extent that it had to do with human nature; that is, he re-

spected the way in which Aristotle found the ideal arising *from* the natural. It fitted with his concept of matter (*Reason in Common Sense* 21). The trouble was and remained (to the distress of Galileo among others) "that Aristotle's physics was false" (24). The falseness consisted of attributing human motivation to matter and of explaining the activity of the elements, using terminology more properly applied to decorous human behaviorwhat Chaucer satirized 1,800 years later in *The House of Fame*.

On page 258 of *Reason in Religion* appears another example of the hybrid view that Santayana arrived at by allowing his acquaintance with Aristotle to add the human dimension lacking in Spinoza. He accomplishes this without explicit reference to either of his precursors, but certain phrases ("vegetable," "the animal level," for Aristotle; "free activity," the idea of self-preservation, for Spinoza) allow us to guess at what he had in mind. Other phrases elsewhere are tags or maxims, some picked up from the *Nicomachean Ethics*"Friends must desire to live as much as possible together and to share their work, thoughts, and pleasures" (*Reason in Society* 153); or from the *Poetics*"Imitation is a fertile principle in the life of Reason" (*Reason in Art* 144).

In 1920 there appeared *Essays in Critical Realism: A Cooperative Study of the Problem of Knowledge*, to which Santayana contributed a paper. He soon deserted, or was excluded from, the American realist movement, with which the Platonic tinge of his theory of essence clashed. This is not the place to undertake such a study, but it would be worthwhile to examine to what extent critical realism and the "neorealism" that

preceded it by a decade were a reversion to pre-Cartesian philosophy. Also, there are interesting parallels here and elsewhere in Santayana's thought to the earlier stages of phenomenology, one of the most important of whose precursors, Brentano, became a Catholic priest. Santayana himself drew a comparison between his own ideas and those of Husserl. The presence of a scarcely acknowledged neo-Scholasticism, a highly refined and meticulously criticized Aristotelianism, does seem to hover around the work of these various thinkers whose affinities were with pre-Reformation Christendom.

So far as I know, he does not make the analogy explicitly, but I cannot help but see in the fourfold division of Santayana's "realms of being" an arrangement that parallels Aristotle's four *causes*. It does not work perfectly, and I can imagine the unhappiness with which Santayana might read this, but here it is: efficient=matter; formal=essence; substantial=spirit; and final=truth. Actually, substantial and efficient causes both tend, for Santayana, to belong to matter; whereas essence is not a cause at all, but does seem to have something formal about it. It might be best to say that his *realms* are quasi-Aristotelian as well as quasi-Christian. This sounds as if I mean to call him "quasi-Scholastic," which

I would rather not do. On the other hand, I do think that, in a way, he was attempting to do for Spinoza (and, in the end, Einstein) what Aquinas did for Aristotle, and Dante for Aquinas. In Santayana's case, he had to accommodate the most extreme and most radically articulated materialism to his entire philosophical outlook. In the very effort at such a synthesis and assimilation, we may see Santayana the Catholic, the wandering scholar, the conscious heir of Mediterranean-centered culture, the fugitive from, and loving critic of, the new civilization, the deracinated and disillusioned free spirit, a monastic more by circumstances than by choice, but one who acceded to those circumstances as one in another era might have acceded to the will of God. And yet it is impossible to dismiss as a neo-Thomist a thinker for whom materialism was fundamental, the foundation of whose views was laid out by one who was anathema to Catholics, Protestants, and Jews equally. The stone upon which Santayana built his cathedral was Spinoza.

3
Spinoza

Although the survey that follows points out many instances of Spinoza's presence in Santayana's writings, the treatment is hardly exhaustive. Additional quotations and implied references, in which it is clear that Santayana had Spinoza in mind, appear also in my discussions of Santayana's materialism, his realms of matter and essence, and his novel, and it is likely that I have overlooked many more. While it may not be true that one meets Spinoza at every turn, his presence in Santayana is like that of the Aegean in Greece: never very far out of sight. Yet, in many discussions of Santayana's philosophy, references to Spinoza are scanty or missing altogether.

One turns, for example, to the essay by Celestine J. Sullivan Jr., "Santayana's Philosophical Inheritance," with the expectation of a balanced treatment of what the title declares and finds there an excellent discussion of Platonism. But the only reference to Spinoza is this: "There has, for example, been no philosopher more original than Spinoza and none more traditional in his thought" (66). The implication is that Santayana belongs in such company, but as flattering as it may be to Santayana, that single reference does not convey just how much he actually owed to Spinoza. To Plato, in fact, Santayana came rather late, whereas he had exulted in what he found in Spinoza from his earliest studies in philosophy. At the time that Sullivan composed his essay, there was not yet available this remark from *Persons and Places*: "I will not attempt to describe here the many lessons that I

learned in the study of Spinoza, lessons that in several respects laid the foundation of my philosophy" (243). In fact, Santayana continues for three pages explaining how his teachers at Harvard handled Spinoza and what Spinoza meant to him. Much earlier, in 1930, Santayana had acknowledged his debt in "A Brief History of My Opinions":

> Spinoza, too, whom I was reading under Royce himself, filled me with joy and enthusiasm: I gathered at once from him a doctrine which has remained axiomatic with me ever since, namely that good and evil are relative to the natures of the animals, irreversible in that relation, but indifferent to the march of cosmic events, since the force of the universe infinitely exceeds the force of any one of its parts. (10)

A curious reluctance to mention Spinoza in connection with Santayana persists. In a recent handbook, the sole reference is: "This is the sort of compliment one is inclined to pay Spinoza and the other masters of beautiful thought" (Lachs 129). Timothy Sprigge's exemplary study *Santayana: An Examination of His Philosophy* traces many connections and discerns many origins of the more technical side of Santayana's thought. Several things that Sprigge says are most helpful in connecting Santayana with Spinoza, among them the observation that Spinoza's *conatus,* or principle of self-preservation, went into Santayana's concept of *psyche* (which I discuss in chapter 5). But this important insight is buried in a note in the back of the book, a note appended to the observation that *psyche* owes much to Aristotle. Indeed, although a deep awareness of Spinoza informs Sprigge's discussion, his actual references to the earlier philosopher only total six, including two notes. Willard E. Arnett's *George Santayana* mentions Spinoza four times. Arnett does demonstrate that the early Greeks and Spinoza formed the basis of Santayana's thought and that Spinoza was the only modern philosopher he could admire without reservation but does little to trace out the Spinozistic aspects of his work.

When Santayana was only twenty-three and still an undergraduate, he composed an essay that appeared in the *Harvard Monthly* for June 1886, "The Ethical Doctrine of Spinoza," in which he exhibits the results of that enthusiasm he alluded to in the words quoted above. In this, almost his earliest published prose work, he concludes by saying:

> I believe that the absolute point of view which Spinoza has so impressively, so overpoweringly enforced cannot be avoided; it is

> the ocean in which every stream of thought is lost; and for that very reason Spinoza's apparent optimism seems to be deceptive. The final word must always be a contradiction of our ideals, of those ideals which alone make things good or bad. The world becomes one oppressive, tyrannous fact, eternally and inexplicably present. It may be possible to lose one's self in this eternal reality, so as no longer to feel its weight: but why should one wish to do so? It is so much easier and saner to confess once for all what seems to be the truth, and then to go about one's other business, guided by the ideal of one's country and of one's heart. (*Idler and His Works* 86)

Writing from Berlin in December 1886, where he had gone on a Walker traveling fellowship following graduation from Harvard, he told Henry Ward Abbot:

> I propose not to bore you with any more of my metaphysics and ethics, but I will say a word by way of conclusion. If you want any more, go to

> Spinoza and Schopenhauer, where I get mine. I don't think Royce's argument against absolute relativity is a mere quibble. But it is not what he makes it, a proof of the existence of one absolute, either in truth or right conduct. (*Letters* 11)

This love of Spinoza was almost an obsession. Anyone familiar with key phrases from the *Ethics*, the *Theological-Political Treatise*, and *On the Improvement of the Understanding* will find upon reading Santayana that one tracks him everywhere in Spinoza's snow. Not only does he explicitly credit Spinoza on many occasions, not only do his key concepts exhibit themselves as adaptations or modifications of Spinoza, but buried in his text are numerous phrases that are English equivalents of Spinoza's very wordsphrases that Santayana evidently expected his readers to recognize. Sixty-five years after the letter to Abbot, he wrote to Richard C. Lyon: "Spinoza does much the same thing for the natural universe [as Leibnitz did for Christian doctrine]. He misplaces nothing, but draws it all in purely intellectual concepts. He is a great master" (*Letters* 423).

Why has so little attention been paid to Santayana-cum-Spinoza? In the early 1930s the Spinozist leanings in his work were sufficiently evident for him to be invited to read an address in the Domus Spinozana at the Hague, in honor of the three-hundredth birthday of the philosopher. Evidently, he was recognized internationally asamong other thingsa Spinozist. Why, then, have most scholarly studies of Santayana neglected this?

The answer may be that, as Santayana tells us, much of what Spinoza has to communicate consists of such hard sayings that we walk no more with him. Then, too, Spinoza's geometrical

method in the *Ethics* is decidedly off-putting. He is reverenced (or reviled, less and less as the centuries pass) from afar. As in the witticism about God, not many people really wish to be in his presence; we would rather hear the lecture about him. Spinoza's teachings are not agreeable either to Christians or to Jews, by whom he was expelled from the Synagogue of Amsterdam; neither humanists nor pragmatists find him quite congenial. As Santayana wrote in his introduction to the Everyman edition of Spinoza (1910):

> No idea of independent social relations, of dramatic give and take, between God and men, such as sacred history seems to assume, could be admitted by Spinoza; since for him God was not one personage in the drama of history among other personages, but rather the whole play of existence, in its total plot, movement, and moral. Furthermore, he conceived the human mind or soul as the consciousness accompanying the life of the human body. Therefore when the body perished, the soul was necessarily dissolved. Nor did the Jewish hope of resurrection, with its mi-

> raculous and self-magnifying quality, find any place in his philosophy. (xvii)

One problem with Spinoza, as with Santayana, is the persistence with which his admirers have managed to find in him a reflection of their own prejudices or an articulation of the spirit of their own times. In our age Spinoza epitomizes the reverence for nature that inspires and validates investigations of the physical universe; for Goethe and Novalis, he was the precursor of their romantic exhilarationa protopantheist. We must therefore beware of taking what Santayana says as the last word on his predecessor. What we can be certain of, however, and what is seldom recognized is just how permeated Santayana's own thinking is with pronouncements from Spinoza's writings.

Partly the affinity was one of temperament. Both philosophers found themselves at odds with a cultural milieu, both were in some sense exiled, alien, independent. Both led lives that were solitary and celibate, though both enjoyed warm friendships with those who appreciated their intellectual powers and engaged in extensive intellectual commerce with the leading philosophical minds of their times. In a playful way, Santayana liked to think of himself as sharing a common origin with Spinoza; explaining the source of his family name, he wrote in *Persons and Places*:

> The name Santayana is derived by phonetic corruption from that of a small town in the Cantabrian hills, not far from the sea and from Santander. . . . This last [Santillana] is the present name of that village; and on the other side of Santander, towards the Southeast, lies the village of Espinosa; so that my witty friend and translator, Don Antonio Marichalar, Marques de Montesa (from whom I borrow an etymology), half in banter and half in compliment finds in those

> seaside mountains, opposite one another, the native soil of Spinoza and of myself. But if I cannot be mentioned without a smile in the same breath with Spinoza for greatness of intellect, he cannot be compared with me for Spanish blood. He was a Jew: his ancestors could have found their way to Espinosa only as they later did to Amsterdam, or he himself to the Hague, or I to America. (10)

But it was not mere fellow-feeling of one good-natured monastic for another that attracted Santayana. He also found in Spinoza the revival of a fundamentally sound reverence for the authority of natural facts: "The Greeks before Socrates reached orthodoxy in natural philosophy, which was reestablished later in Spinoza and in modern science" ("General Confession" 22). This assertion, which reappears in various forms throughout his writings, was not sufficient to convince Baker Brownell, who was fond enough of Santayana to wish to stake

an American claim on his philosophical territory: "The American presence in Santayana's work is greater than he realizes. He found there the mass and power of life, the sense of a world in motion over which he had little control. His naturalism came not from Lucretius or Spinoza, for no naturalism can be in the past tense" (55). I can make no sense of the final phrase in Brownell's last sentence. All that Santayana could say in reply was to reassert that whatever quality Brownell found, "It is evidently not my professed cosmological naturalism, which I consciously draw from Democritus, Lucretius, and Spinoza" ("Apologia Pro Mente Sua" 600).

It has always been easier to perceive the Spinozan presence in Santayana's moral philosophy than in his cosmology, so that in the midst of a discussion of the Platonism in his poetry, Philip Blair Rice remarks that "During the time when he wrote these sonnets, he was engaged in working out his theory of value, which is closer to Spinoza than to orthodox Platonism, if one excepts the *Philebus* and *Statesman* from orthodoxy. Values, as Santayana conceives them, are expressions of the living preferences of the organism" (281). Eliseo Vivas, in an essay that, as Santayana said, at least did not misrepresent him, also noted: "When Santayana, harking back to Spinoza who would call things good because desired, undertook to demonstrate that human needs account for the appearance of ideals without residue, he took an important step forward in value theory" (339).

Even more to the point are Bertrand Russell's discriminating remarks, in which he anticipates an important distinction between

Spinoza and Santayana:

> Santayana, like Spinoza, is to be read, not so much on account of his theoretical doctrines, as on account of his view as to what constitutes the good life, and of his standard of values in art and morals. I do not mean to suggest that either his opinions or his values resemble Spinoza's. Spinoza, he says, failed to reconstitute the life of reason because "everything impassioned seemed to him insane, everything human necessarily petty. Man was to be a pious tame animal, with stars shining above his head." The likeness to Spinoza consists in concern for the life of reason, not in the theory as to what it consists of. ("Philosophy of Santayana" 45354)

What Russell says may seem to contradict both Santayana and the other writers whom I have just been quoting with approval; but Russell is focusing on just how Santayana went beyond the basic lessons he had learned, at which point he found it necessary to reassert the dignity of specifically human values and the intrinsic interest and importance of individual identity; for Santayana, and for Russell through Santayana, Spinoza had served as a powerful corrective to

overreaching moralists for whom human interests (in some cases, Prussian interests) were the *only* criterion of importance.

At times Santayana's reverence for Spinoza has appeared, to those hostile to his ways of thinking, as a form of presumptuousnessan attempt to arrogate to himself the sanctity of a truly great philosopher. At least that is how I explain the tone taken by Paul Arthur Schilpp, who first quotes Santayana: "What I call spirit is only that inner light of actuality or attention which floods all life as men actually live on earth. It is roughly the same thing as feeling or thought; it might be called consciousness; it might be identified with the *pensée* or *cogitatio* of Descartes or Spinoza" (*Realm of Spirit* vii). Schilpp then replies:

> For here, within the space of two sentences (and in the second paragraph of the Preface of this new book), Mr. Santayana succeeds in throwing together, helter-skelter, such concepts as feeling, thought, consciousness, Descartes' *pensée*, and Spinoza's *cogitatio*, and to equate all of these not merely with each other, but also with "spirit." . . . Besides, why write a three-hundred page book about a mystery anyway? Or, if one writes such a book, why suppose that it could possibly be of any interest to serious-minded philosophers, theologians, scientists, or other scholars? ("Santayana on *The Realm of Spirit*" 380)

Schilpp also engaged in Milton K. Munitz's practicein his article in the same volumeof running together fragments taken from four separate pages in Santayana's book, effectively making out of him what he wished. But, as if to counter both his own hostility and occasional unfairness, Schilpp quotes several entire pages from Santayana's definitions of terms that appear in the preface to *The Realm of Spirit*, and Santayana said in a letter to

Schilpp that he considered this "an ample reply to your chief criticism." Evidentlyunlike Bertrand RussellSchilpp simply did not realize that beneath the beauty of the prose style there did lie a sound intellectual structure, even if it did not express itself in the glyphs of symbolic logic or with the knottiness of a Wittgenstein or a Carnap.

My point, however, is that when Schilpp speaks of Santayana as "throwing together, helter-skelter" Spinoza along with everything else, he fails to appreciate the thoroughness and depth with which the one had assimilated the other.

For the rest of this chapter, I will demonstrate the constant presence of Spinoza in his thoughts. Often there is the explicit use of his name, which anyone might look up in those of Santayana's books that include indexes; but equally often it is just a fragment of a phrase or the reformulation of a Spinozan opinion or attitude, which betrays the total immersion of Santayana's initial

baptism in materialism. Remembering Novalis's words, one might call him *ein Spinozabetrunkener Mensch*, except that it is extremely hard to get drunk on a cold shower.

Spinozan naturalism and morals lie behind the aesthetics of *The Sense of Beauty*.

> We may therefore at once assert this axiom, important for all moral philosophy and fatal to certain stubborn incoherences of thought, that there is no value apart from some appreciation of it, and no good apart from some preference of it before its absence or its opposite. In appreciation, in preference, lies the root and essence of all excellence. Or, as Spinoza clearly expresses it, we desire nothing because it is good, but it is good only because we desire it. (18)

It is odd to see Spinoza being put to such purposes, since there is little evidence that he enjoyed or concerned himself very much with the arts. He did seem to look with favor on various ways of making life pleasantanything innocently conducive to health and sanity, such as flower gardening. But Spinoza's views are taken by Santayana as a license to attack aesthetic absolutism, as he later criticized the moral absolutes of G. E. Moore. "Are all things beautiful?" he asks. "Are all types equally beautiful when we abstract from our practical prejudices? If the reader has given his assent to the foregoing propositions, he will easily see that, in one sense, we must declare that no object is essentially ugly" (126).

Spinoza's "intellectual love of God" even finds a place in *The Sense of Beauty*. In the chapter "Expression," where he is discussing the effect of tragedy, he says:

> For the more of the accidental vesture of life we are able to strip

> ourselves of, the more naked and simple is the surviving spirit; the more complete its superiority and unity, and, consequently, the more unqualified its joy. There remains little in us, then, but that intellectual essence, which several great philosophers have called eternal and identified with the Divinity. (237)

The last sentence is a paraphrase of part of the proof to proposition 23, part 5, of Spinoza's *Ethics*.

Near the beginning of *Reason in Common Sense,* we find Santayana offering a series of summary comments: "Everyone leads the Life of Reason in so far as he finds a steady light behind the world's glitter and a clear residuum of joy beneath pleasure or success" (6). This is very close to proposition 42, part 4, of the *Ethics*, which states simply that there is no such thing as excessive cheerfulness in comparison to other disordering kinds of emotion.

In the course of attacking puritanical Protestant ethics in *Reason in Common Sense*, Santayana finds occasion to refer directly to Spinoza; at the same point, however, he also exposes the limits that he found in the older philosopher's views. It is this passage from which Bertrand Russell quoted above:

> One great modern philosopher, however, was free from these preconceptions, and might have reconstituted the Life of Reason had he had sufficient interest in culture. Spinoza brought man back into nature, and made him the nucleus of all moral values, showing how he may master it. But Spinoza's sympathy with mankind fell short of imagination; any noble political or poetical ideal eluded him. Everything impassioned seemed to him insane, everything human necessarily petty. Man was to be a pious tame animal, with the stars shining above his head. Instead of imagination Spinoza cultivated mysticism, which is indeed an alternative. A prophet in speculation, he remained a levite in sentiment. Little or nothing would need to be changed in his system if the Life of Reason, in its higher ranges, were to be grafted upon it; but such affiliation is not necessary, and it is rendered unnatural by the lack of sweep and generosity in Spinoza's practical ideals. (3031)

Nothing else demonstrates how clearly Santayana built his own philosophy upon that of Spinoza and yet how clearly he saw its limits. The judgments are severe, especially if one takes into sympathetic account the multifold impoverishment of Spinoza's own existence, some of which was involuntary. But just here Santayana had to draw the line along which he would erect his defenses against developments that tended toward logical positivism.

Spinozan, too, is the sentence on page 43, "Hot and Cold, here

and there, good and bad, now and then, are dyads that spring into being when the flux accentuates some term and so makes possible a discrimination of parts and directions in its own movement." Here we have not only the moral relativity, but also the authority of creating nature, the flux of matter, that was fundamental to Santayana's cosmos.

The importance that the *Ethics* places on active rather than passive understanding, on gaining an insight into the springs of our own behavior, also appears in *Reason in Common Sense*. Quoting here, at first, the well-worn phrase from Virgil's *Georgics*, Santayana gives it a seventeenth-century twist: "*Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*, says a poet who stood near enough to fundamental human needs and to the great answer which art and civilisation can make to them, to value the Life of Reason and think it sublime. To discern causes is to turn vision into knowledge and motion into action" (60). Here we see Santayana in the actual process of grafting onto the solid trunk of Spinozistic reason the

more fruitful wood of the human imagination. "The calm spaces in life are filled with power and its spasm with resource," he continues. "No emotion can overwhelm the mind, for of none is the basis or issue wholly hidden." In other words, the life of reason is to be an enterprise in understanding and harmonizing the emotionsnot simply subduing or eliminating most of them, as Spinoza would have us do.

He also insists, more than does Spinoza, on the importance of these goods and evils that are relative to ourselves. Just at this point, Santayana's outlook is tempered with William James's kindliness, maybe even a little of John Stuart Mill's benevolence:

> An experience good or bad in itself remains so for ever, and its inclusion in a more general order of things can only change that totality proportionately to the ingredient absorbed, which will infect the mass, so far as it goes, with its own colour. The more pleasure a universe can yield, other things being equal, the more beneficent and generous its general nature; the more pains its constitution involves, the darker and more malign is its total temper. (*Reason in Common Sense* 55)

Much of the political science that makes its way into *Reason in Society* appears based on what Spinoza borrowed from Hobbes and included in the *Theological-Political Treatise*. "The possibility of intelligent selfishness and the prevalence of selfishness far from intelligent unite to make men wary in entrusting their interests to another's keeping" (117). Santayana to some degree misuses Spinoza in this chapter ("Democracy") when he instances the concluding words of the *Ethics* to support an argument that has a definitely antidemocratic tinge to it. Santayana's views on practical politics are among his least useful.

Here, he argues that what a government needs is excellence, which may not necessarily reside in the vox populi. "But anything approaching such true excellence is as rare as it is great" (121) he writes, meaning political wisdom where Spinoza meant excellence of philosophical outlook. The same phrase occurs in yet another context, where Santayana is arguing that "significant thoughts" are an accessible part of nature, that they are part of a well-regulated organism's consciousness: "The mind spreads and soars in proportion as the body feeds on the surrounding world. Noble ideas, although rare and difficult to attain, are not naturally fugitive" (139).

Early in *Reason in Religion*, one encounters an unmistakable declaration of Spinozism: "For moral significance is relative to particular interests and to natures having a constitutional and definite basis, and having consequently special preferences which it is chimerical to expect the rest of the world to be de-

termined by" (24). The discussion in chapter 9, "The Christian Compromise," is deeply tinged with Spinoza's thought:

> Evil may be no more a metaphysical existence than good is; both are undoubtedly mere terms for vital unities and impediments. . . . It is the part of justice and charity to recognise this situation, in view of which we may justly say that evil is always relative and subordinate to some constituted nature in itself a standard of worth, a point of departure for the moral evaluation of surrounding things. (16264)

Turning to *piety* in *Reason in Religion*, he takes up the question of whether a religion of humanity is possible. His remarks in this part of the book no doubt reveal chinks in his armor that invite attack from activists and reformers, even from those Catholics who have imbibed the spirits of American evangelism. For those to whom the concept of original sin remains valuable, however, what he says makes sensethough he does not, of course, argue in those terms. The Spinozan tincture of his thought becomes apparent here when he uses, without feeling the need of attribution, a certain phrase: "But this religion of humanity is rather a desideratum than a fact: humanity does not appear to anybody in a religious light. The *nihil homine homini utilius* remains a signal truth, but the collective influence of men and their average nature are far too mixed and ambiguous to fill the soul with veneration" (189). Here he remembers item 9 in the appendix to part 4 of the *Ethics*, in which Spinoza quite sensibly points out the value in human society of mutual usefulness; the sense is "nothing is more useful to a man than another (rational) man."

> But piety is to be directed towards the universe itself, towards *Deus sive natura*. Great is this organism of mud and fire, terrible this vast,

> painful, glorious experiment. Why should we not look on the universe with piety? Is it not our substance? Are we made of other clay? All our possibilities lie from eternity in its bosom. (191)

This piety is what remained with Spinoza when he could no longer bring himself to worship in the fashion approved by the Amsterdam Synagogue, but which he had acquired before he fell away from Judaism: the devotion to the One God, maker and ruler of heaven and earth. It took Santayana several more volumes and several decades to do it, but he finallyin the last volume of *Realms of Being*came around to the admission that in his own realm of matter, which he anticipates in the quotation above, he found an equivalent of Jehovah, of God the Father.

Everything that Santayana had to say about immortality in "The Belief in

a Future Life" (chapter 13 of *Reason in Religion*) bears the imprint of Spinoza's thinking:

> Ideal immortality is a principle revealed to insight; it is seen by observing the eternal quality of ideas and validities, and the affinity to them native to reason or the cognitive energy of mind. A future life, on the contrary, is a matter for faith or presumption; it is a prophetic hypothesis regarding occult existences. This latter question is scientific and empirical, and should be treated as such. (229)

In other words, the search for the Christian (or anybody's) heaven might as well be carried out the way one searches for extraterrestrial intelligence, using the largest radio antennas available; true immortality is a matter of recognizing what, within oneself, is immortal. I have read and reread Spinoza many times on this subject, and I think that I discern some glimmer of that blaze amid which he staggered; as I understand it, he says that the more completely, here and now, we can see our true position in the scheme of the universe, to that degree are we immortal, since we are then most nearly identified with God. But like everything else in Spinoza, such a state is hard and rare. Santayana is more at home here than most of us:

> This heritage is humanity itself, the presence of immortal reason in creatures that perish. Apprehension, which makes man so like a god, makes him in one respect immortal; it quickens his numbered moments with a vision of what never dies, the truth of those moments and their inalienable values. (263)

I would like to emphasize that here Santayana is speaking earnestly in his own person, not as an exponent of Spinoza; but we see how completely the one is imbued with the other.

Speaking of the unity among human beings in truth and in reason, he says: "The same function is the seat of human immortality. Reason lifts a larger or a smaller element in each man to the plane of ideality according as reason more or less thoroughly leavens and permeates the lump" (265).

Santayana was always concerned to modify what he found in Spinoza, especially in the direction of humanizing his thought. He felt, too, that one found in the older philosopher very little appreciation for the consolations afforded by the artseven a dullness and insensitivity to the variety of human nature. It was the world of the anatomical manikinnot the rotund celebrants in Breughel's *Kermess*. So it is not surprising that one finds no references to Spinoza and little evidence that the author had him in mind during the composition of *Reason in Art.* There is one phrase, however, that anticipates the way in which

as we shall seeSantayana tried to restore some wealth to the penurious cosmos, to redress the balance in the direction of human concerns. "As meditation on death and life make equally for wisdom, so the expression of sorrow and joy make equally for beauty" (65). This is, of course, a correction of Spinoza's famous dictum in proposition 67 of part 4 of the *Ethics*, "A free man thinks of death least of all things, and his wisdom is a meditation of life, not of death."

Since Santayana was a scientist only at second or third hand, knowing very little of actual laboratory or observational methods and not being as conversant as he might have been in current scientific developments, it is not surprising that he leans heavily on Spinoza in *Reason in Science*. Bertrand Russell thought the book to be not about science at all, in the usual sense. We should say that in it, Santayana writes from the point of view of a very general prospect overlooking the natural world, leaving it to the physical and biological scientists, whose methods he endorses and trusts completely, to fill in the details.

In some sense, the change in the attitude toward physical nature that occurred throughout the early seventeenth century, and of which Spinoza is one representative, provided the warrant for all modern scientific investigation. But *Reason in Science* also includes a critique of Spinoza's *conatus*, or principle of self-preservation, that is quite revealing in what it tells us about Santayana.

> Spinoza's account of the passions is a beautiful example of dialectical psychology, beautiful because it shows so clearly the possibilities and impossibilities in such a method. Spinoza began

> with self-preservation, which was to be the principle of life and the root of all feelings. The violence done to physics appears in this beginning. Self-preservation, taken strictly, is a principle not illustrated in nature, where everything is in flux, and where habits destructive or dangerous to the body are as conspicuous as protective instincts. Physical mechanism requires reproduction, which implies death, and it admits suicide. Spinoza himself, far too noble a mind to be fixed solely on preserving its own existence, was compelled to give self-preservation an extravagant meaning in order to identify it with "intellectual love of God" or the happy contemplation of that natural law which destroyed all individuals. (13637)

I suppose that what Santayana is attempting here is to contradict Spinoza's assertion, in propositions 46, part 3 of the *Ethics*, that persistence in being, self-preservation, is so basic among physical entities that nothing can be destroyed except by a force outside itself. To admit suicide and other conscious or unconscious self-destructive behavior among human beings is to allow a complexity of personality and motivation that is quite lacking in Spinoza's mechanism. But

surely Santayana overstates the case when he plays down self-protective behavior; one sees this everywhere, from the stability of certain subatomic particles to defense mechanisms in the inflated ego of a temperamental poet.

Also, the leap from a reference to the *conatus* to the "intellectual love of God" is more abrupt than what one finds in Spinoza; Santayana must have meant thatfor Spinozato love God was to admit this ubiquitous and inevitable effort on the part of natural entities. What we may actually see here is an attempt to modify Spinoza by using Schopenhaueror it is just Santayana's own indifference to, or distance from, a happy family life that leads him to use the phrase, "reproduction, which implies death." Santayana did feel keenly his own distinctive identity and valued it too much to rejoice in the annihilation of his personality in the grand march of the universe. He did not take pleasure, as many do, in blending into a crowd, in feeling oneself part of the swarm; he disliked precisely that mystical side of Spinoza, as he disliked most other mysticisms in which the self seemed to disintegrate. Elsewhere, he speaks of sex as he does here, implying that it involves the destruction of personal identity.

Perhaps, however, he means to be even more mechanistic than Spinoza when he says, "Self-preservation, being thus no principle of natural history . . ." (*Reason in Science* 137). He felt in Spinoza's *conatus* an incipient transcendentalism, a hint of egotism, or a tincture of literary psychology where there should be nothing but frigid assessment of the physical basis of existence. In the other direction, he seems to fault Spinoza for oversimplifying human emotional life in categorizing the

passions as if they were so many allotropes of carbon, or so many basic arrangements of atoms found in crystallography. He also objects to the dialectical method because it falsifies what it is applied to. At least, that is what I take to be the burden of Santayana's discourse; his love and respect for Spinoza are so profound that he delivers his criticisms in an elaborately periphrastic and indirect way, so as to criticize without discrediting. This makes it hard to see exactly what he does mean. He wants to object to the aridity and poverty of Spinozism and to argue that physiological psychology cannot be fused with literary psychologythat the chemical balances in the brain cannot be easily made to parallel the insights of Freud; and yet he does not wish to introduce a pernicious dualism. What he says a few pages further on supports this understanding (or misunderstanding):

> Spinoza made a great improvement in the system [of Descartes] by attaching the mind more systematically to the body, and studying the parts which organ and object played in qualifying knowledge; but his conception of mental unities and mental processes remained literary, or at best,

> as we have seen, dialectical. No shadow of a principle at once psychic and genetic appeared in his philosophy. All mind was still a transcript of material facts or a deepening of moral relations. (152)

Santayana's dilemma is that of a person who wants simultaneously to do justice to the authority of matter, with its (for him, arbitrarily or contingently assumed) laws, and also to the richness of specifically human experience, human consciousness. He sees in Spinoza dangerous residues that could make him, for example, a philosophical hero for Goetheand likewise, the forerunner of a soulless materialism. Bertrand Russell was not so bothered as Santayana was by the second of these, but he agreed that there was something wrong with the dialectical approach to physical reality, and he put it with refreshing plainness: "*Facts* have to be discovered by observation, not by reasoning" (*History* 578).

One of the oddities of *Reason in Science* is that it culminates as a moral treatise and includes the most valuable summary of Santayana's moral philosophy. Three successive chapters bear the titles "Prerational Morality," "Rational Ethics," and "Post-Rational Morality" and constitute a survey of early Greek, Hebraic, Socratic, Platonic, Christian, Stoic, Epicurean, Indian, and other systems of morals. An understanding of these is essential to a complete appreciation not only of Santayana's other philosophical writings but also for *The Last Puritan*, the characters of which, as I shall show, exemplify various of these systems or outlooks. It appears that a consideration of Spinoza's point of view is what led Santayana in this direction in *Reason in Science*. He argues that morality proper is prerational moralitythat it is all a question of preferences, of what we desire

and therefore conceive to be the good. "Why one values anything at all, or anything in particular, is a question of physics; it asks for the causes of interest, judgment, and desire. To esteem a thing good is to express certain affinities between that thing and the speaker. . . . The causes of morality, good or bad, are physical, seeing that they are causes" (21415). This is straight Spinozism. Put this way, it is easy to see why Spinoza was treated as an outrageously wicked person by Jews and Christians alikeand Santayana evidently wants us to confront what he says as directly as possible. This starkness is to serve as a curative for the disease of romanticism, among other things, and especially that form that the disease took in Goethe, who is of special interest precisely because he took Spinoza unto himself.

The discussion of Lucretius in *Three Philosophical Poets* parallels Santayana's treatment of Spinoza, and he raises some objections to the Lucretian world view that are likewise parallel. For example, he chides Lucretius for dismissing superstition as not worth further inquiry, whereas for Santayana, superstition is

one more product of matter and ought on that account to interest even a materialist. Also, he seems to feel that in some respects Lucretius lacked human complexities, just as Spinoza did: "Our ignorance of the life of Lucretius is not, I think, much to be regretted. His work preserves that part of him which he would have wished to preserve" (20). Santayana means that the immortal part of Lucretius is his insight into the material structureits majesty and pathosof the universe and that such insight is, in the Spinozan sense, immortality itself. When he comes to Dante, we feel that what appeals first of all to Santayana in *The Divine Comedy* is its fundamental truth regarding the conditions of life, what he called "the divine right of the real" in connection with Spinoza. But it is not until he takes up Goethe that we see him bringing in Spinoza explicitly, as he does on the first page of the third part of the book.

> It is true that [Goethe] was all his life a follower of Spinoza, and that he may be termed, without hesitation, a naturalist in philosophy and a pantheist. His adherence to the general attitude of Spinoza, however, did not exclude a great plasticity and freedom in his own views, even on the most fundamental points. Thus Goethe did not admit the mechanical interpretation of nature advocated by Spinoza. He also assigned, at least to privileged souls, like his own, a more personal sort of immortality than Spinoza allowed. Moreover, he harboured a generous sympathy with the dramatic explanations of nature and history current in the Germany of his day. Yet such transcendental idealism, making the world the expression of a spiritual endeavor, was a total reversal of that conviction, so profound in Spinoza, that all moral energies are resident in particular creatures, themselves sparks in an absolutely infinite and purposeless world. (13940)

We will have to wait to hear the words of Oliver Alden, hero of *The Last Puritan*, when he finally becomes thoroughly disgusted with the Germaneven the Goetheanform of transcendentalism, before we realize what a complete rejection of Goethe this really is. Given Santayana's moral views, he might have simply called the great poet an immoral egotist. And yet his purpose is not to effect a subversion of Goethe's reputation but rather to permit Goethe to modify what needs changing in Spinozism, to contribute to the enlargement of the human dimension. Santayana never denied that the basic insights of the empiricists and the transcendentalists were invaluablethe recognition that we do exist in "the solipsism of the present moment," that we are inevitably the center of our own life's drama, that we cannot help seeing others, not as they are, but as they act out parts that we have assigned them in some opera staged in our own consciousness.

At the same time, there is always an ironic edge in Santayana that is trimming away at the incipient grandiosity that he discovers in Goethe. The spirits of nature whisper to Faust, "Pity and remorse, they seem to say in the words of Spinoza, are evil and vain; failure is incidental; error is innocent" (*Three Philosophical Poets* 170). But whereas Spinoza was emphasizing the uselessness of such feelings, as opposed to the employment of active and practical understanding, we cannot help feeling that in Goethe we are adrift on a current that carries us toward the magnificent contempt for underlings of the *Ubermensch*, whose disdain for pity and remorse promotes egotistical cruelty rather than clear-headedness.

"Goethe is the poet of life," says Santayana in the conclusion of *Three Philosophical Poets*. Although he does not use the terminology in speaking of Goethe, I think that he must mean that Goethe, as the best kind of romantic, speaks to the prerational urge to live, that he represents animal egoism in the most superb and yet innocent form that it can take in human nature. He argues that if Goethe had contemplated nature steadfastly, instead of merely celebrating it, he would have achieved a genuine naturalism that is superior to transcendentalism. But, as I read what Santayana says, Goethe tried to live imaginatively through his poem, and the consequence is a surge of irrational energy because "the spirit of nature is itself romantic. It lives spontaneously, bravely, without premeditation, and for the sake of living rather than of enjoying or attaining anything final" (189). It is the exhilaration in the awareness of one's own existencethe *joy* of Schiller's ode or, to

reverse and make the phrase less sinister, a sort of *freude durch kraft.*

Santayana explains just what, in these terms, Spinoza meant to Goethe:

> The secret of what is serious in the moral of Faust is to be looked for in Spinoza,the source of what is serious in Goethe. Spinoza has as admirable doctrine, or rather insight, which he calls seeing things under the form of eternity. This faculty is fundamental in the human mind; ordinary perception and memory are cases of it. Therefore, when we use it to deal with ultimate issues, we are not alienated from experience, but, on the contrary, endowed with experience and with its fruits. A thing is seen under the form of eternity when all its parts or stages are conceived in their true relations, and thereby conceived together. (*Three Philosophical Poets* 18990)

It is tempting to go on quoting and let Santayana make his points for himself. But to summarize his argument: he says that, under the aspect of eternity, Faust has lived out a life of unceasing striving, never stopping to accept or to enjoy

the passing moment, and that "to have felt such perpetual dissatisfaction is truly satisfactory." Santayana wished to refrain from scandalizing hismostly academicGoethe-worshipping readers. He could have pointed out that Faust resembles nothing so much as a hard-driving businessman who turns, in the end, to public benefactions and whose ultimate satisfaction in life depends on his never having left himself any time to think about anything. Instead, Santayana tried to get as much good as possible out of Goethe, and he does this by identifying Faustian striving with the prerational, childishly egocentric impulses that initiate human lifewhich are a necessary condition but of a lower order than Lucretian accommodation to nature, or Dantesque ascent from it. In Goethe, Santayana finds a convincing exponent, too, of the value of individual purpose and consciousnessthe flowering of the ego as a second or third wave of the Christian-Protestant-Romantic affirmation of the worth of the individual soul. It may be that the only thing that Goethe could truly see under the aspect of eternity was the soul of Goethe, but at least he saw that, and it was an important perception.

A few years later, Santayana was more direct about his feelings, when he composed the chapter "Hints of Egotism in Goethe" that appeared in *Egotism in German Philosophy* (1916). Here it is clearer that what attracted Goethe to Spinoza was exactly what Santayana did not likea pantheistic exhilaration at the march of the cosmos, a mystical willingness to exult in the rightness of the whole process, no matter how injurious it might be on occasion to some of its particular parts. This led, in Goethe, to an innocent assumption that one was on the right side of things.

> [A]bsolute egotism in Goethe, as in Emerson, summoned all nature to minister to the self: all nature, if not actually compelled to this service by creative human fiat, could at least be won over to it by the engaging heroism of her favorite child. In his warm pantheistic way Goethe felt the swarming universal life about him; he had no thought of dragooning it at all, as sectarians and nationalists would, into vindicating some particular creed or nation. Yet that fertile and impartial universe left each life free and in uncensored competition with every other life. (37)

Though anxious, still, to preserve what is good in Goethe and to use him to vindicate the fundamental right of each striving psyche to assert its own interests, Santayana does discover ominous shades that he did not reveal in the earlier book and even convicts Goethe of an impossibly anachronistic sympathy with Nietzsche and Schopenhauerand, by implication, with their crude, cruel, and egotistical offspring.

To sum up: Santayana sees some use for Goethe as a corrective to the inhuman barrenness, the lunar landscape of Spinoza's mind; but he sees much greater dangers in the other direction, in the cancerous proliferation of the transcendental ego. And he finds in Spinoza the rediscovery of a fundamental reverenceso much so that in *Dialogues in Limbo* he has both Democritus and Socrates say things that sound much like passages from Spinoza's *Ethics.*

Santayana is somewhat jealous when it comes to allowing philosophical idealists to put Spinoza's outlook to their own uses. "The face of existence," he writes in the concluding pages of *The Realm of Matter*," as open to an omnivorously curious mind, is sublime and fascinating enough, but it is surely more than human, less than moral, other than dialectical. It is something like the universe of Spinoza . . . essentially the natural world, the realm of matter" (2034). He then goes on to say that although philosophical idealism may convince us that our view of this realm is the work of our own minds, this does not improve the universe and actually spoils our picture of it by seeming to involve us in its creation, rather than enabling us to recognize that it has created us. Anticipating Oliver Alden's insight (in *The Last Puritan*), he asks, "Why not adapt these passionate demands of oursso vague and helpless beyond the circle of our domestic needsto that larger economy by which we must live, if we are to live at all?" (2056). So here he has reverted to the use of Spinoza as a rod to chasten Immanuel Kant and the rest of the Germanic rabble.

I will consider, in accounting for Santayana's realm of essence,

precisely those ways in which his views correspond to and differ from Spinoza's, but first I quote some passages from *The Realm of Essence* to show that he always had Spinoza in mind here, too.

> Even if the whole realm of essence (as Spinoza assumed) were realized somewhere at some time in the life of nature, essence would remain a different and non-existent realm.
>
> . . . Pure being is thus found in all essences somewhat as light is in all colours or life in all feeling and thought; and philosophers like Parmenides or Spinoza (not to speak here of the Indians) assure us that we always have an adequate intuition of pure being. . . .
>
> . . . Again, we find Spinoza asserting that the entire nature of beingwhich he actually calls substancemust be manifested in existence, and that these manifestations must be parallel to the forms of the material world. (22, 45, 51)

Much further into *The Realm of Essence*, his argument takes a curious turn. Spinoza, he asserts, by his very devotion to substance discovered essence in San-

tayana's terms. Infinitude, for Santayana, was a key ingredient (if that word will do) of essence, or of the essences.

> It was reserved for Spinoza, still under the persuasion that he was describing substance, to conceive essence in its omnimodal immensity. . . . All that his pious heart respected was substancethat which exerts force, works in nature, and might feed or threaten him in his contentment. In spite of his speculative scope, his wisdom was Levitical; he craved above all things to be safe and sure in his corner of the Lord's house. . . .
>
> It was the plethora of this passion, at once sacrificial and omnivorous, that carried Spinoza into the realm of essence, and made him gloat on its infinity. He found a cruel pleasure in asserting that every part of it existed, thereby putting to shame the conceit of mankind, and in that abasement finding a fanatical compensation for his own frailty. (16061)

In *The Realm of Spirit*, he finds it necessary to qualify and enrich Spinoza's basic outlookto modify it so as to allow for the legitimate drama of the spirit. We may say of pain, with better reason, what Spinoza said of remorse and pity in part 4 of the *Ethics*: that it is bad and useless.

> The *pain* in remorse and pity is futile, but not the spiritual or tragic *perception* of the evil in question: for this perception indicates no impediment in the psyche now, but on the contrary an enveloping synthesis by which the old calamity and its neutralization in the vast contest of truth are present to the spirit, and radically present for ever. Such tragic insight, such pity and remorse, are parts of the highest good. (12627)

When we read this we can be more confident that in Santayana we do not find the evangelistic forerunner of Ayn Rand.

The only explicit reference to Spinoza in *The Realm of Truth* occurs in the passage with which he concludes his preface, one of several extended quotations from his earlier writings. This passage comes from the introduction to his edition of Spinoza, however, and I would argue that its placement here is meant to emphasize the prevailing Spinozistic tincture of the entire volume. The whole of the realm of truth is the totality of all exemplified essences and all matter, as seen under the aspect of eternity. Implied at the same time is the limitation of Spinoza's truth: "It would be inhuman and fanatical to set up truth as the only good. The good is perfection of life for each creature according to its kind" (140).

It was with considerable surprise that I discovered to what extent the analysis of Christianity in *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels* was conducted in Spinozist

terms; indeed, we hardly get into the book before he stops to spend an entire page on that philosopher, who was a bête noire for so many Christians:

> I know of only one critic, and he the earliest, who has radically escaped this snare [of some kind of religious inspiration] by virtue of exceptional isolation and exceptional genius. "The Jews," writes Spinoza (who was one of them), "if they make money by a transaction, say God gave it to them; if they desire anything they say God has disposed their hearts towards it; if they think anything they say God has told them." Here is inspiration stripped of all its verbal drapery and seen *in puris naturalibus*. No less penetrating and radical is Spinoza concerning Christ. He wrote, however, in the midst of the blindest theological controversies and rival fanaticisms; and sometimes he ironically adapted his language to the cant of his time. So the word "salvation," in the following passage, must be taken in a double sense, one for his readers, another for his secret mind. "It is not in the least needful for salvation"he privately meant needful for a happy life"to know Christ according to the flesh; but concerning that so-called eternal Son of God (*de aeterno illo Dei filio*), that is, God's eternal wisdom, which is manifested in all things, and chiefly in the mind of man, and most particularly in Christ Jesus, the case is far otherwise. For without this no man can arrive at a state of blessedness, inasmuch as nothing else can teach him what is true or false, what is good or evil." The historical Jesus and the ideal Christ are here distinguished clearly, and seen in their respective nakedness. Spinoza was not a born poet by nature, and fate had not caused him to be a Christian. If he consequently escaped illusion in one direction, he missed insight in another. (56)

Here we see an insistence on the radical correctness of Spinoza's views and, simultaneously, a recognition of their aridity, of the need for something more specifically human.

Santayana does not name Spinoza, but was thinking of him, when he wrote, "This neutral authority of nature is so great that sometimes its ways are identified with the ways of God. . . . Among the Jews . . . God was an irresponsible power, as nature actually is" (*Idea of Christ* 94, 102). In the chapter "Moralism," Santayana gives much space to both Marcus Aurelius and Spinoza, who were for him the types of sublimely independent minds who could, completely on their own, rediscover a reverence for God-in-nature without the assistance of any religious tradition. In a long passage, he speaks about Spinoza's allegiance to truth, quoting some of the famous phrases from the *Ethics*, such as the one that moved Goethe especially (and for the wrong reasons): "One who truly loves God cannot wish that God should love him in return."

> Certainly in this "intellectual love of God" there is great elevation; it brings to a head that inflexible courage and honesty that characterise all Spinoza's thinking, even when his pious diction might seem disingenuous: because his religious emotion was genuine, although its object was not the object of popular religion. This very limitation of his sympathies has a savage dignity and strength, as it has in many ancient sages. It presupposes such love and respect for the universal order as to render contemptible the desire for miracles or favours for any creature or tribe of creatures. (208)

Santayana employs, as a term that he expects his readers to be familiar with, Spinoza's *natura naturans*, which he calls "the potentiality in matter working as in a seed and unfolding itself in every form of life" (213). Another way to put it would be to call it" God in the act of bringing forth the universe." For Santayana, it is the unreflecting fertility of matter, analogous in some ways to the idea of God the Father, Maker of Heaven and Earth.

"Few," says Santayana, thinking of Spinoza, "are courageous enough to accept nature as it is, and to build their spiritual house on the hard rock of the truth." And he adds, "It was a sad misfortune for Christian theory that it drew its philosophy from the disciples of Socrates rather than from his predecessors, who had faced the world bravely and without prejudice" (*Idea of Christ* 237). To the concluding sentences of the book, we continue to hear his mentor's voice ("the automatism of life in most men thirsts for irrelevant excitements"). What we need to do, Santayana tells us, is to rebuild our faith on a sounder foundation. "The world does not wish to be saved. . . . The flux of existence cannot be stopped by reflection." Like his own essences, he wishes to beckon us in the direction of some higher

spirituality that does not rest on a rejection of the very circumstances that brought us into existence, circumstances that enable us to live, if we choose to do so, under the aspect of eternity. In Spinoza he discovered an insistence on the basic conditions of our existence, a firm foundation upon which to build.

Late in life, Santayana felt the need to modify even more severely than heretofore his early enthusiasm for Spinoza's cosmic exhilaration and to restate more forcefully his reservations about Spinozism. In a passage that was omitted from the original edition of *Persons and Places*, he spoke with extraordinary candor on the subject of his limitations.

> Now Spinoza, my master and model in respect to the first point [the natural basis of morality], does not satisfy me on the second [the humane possibilities, the "types of excellence towards which life may be directed"];

> and I will take this opportunity, since I may not have any other, of clearing my conscience of ambiguity in that respect. The complete moralist must not only be sound in physics, but must be inwardly inspired by a normal human soul and an adequate human tradition; he must be a complete humanist in a complete naturalist. Spinoza was not only a complete naturalist but, by a rare combination, also a spiritual man, seeing and accepting the place of the human heart in the universe; accepting it not grudgingly or viciously or frivolously, as your worldling does, but humbly and joyously: humbly in that he asked to be nothing more than he was, and joyously because what he was allowed him, in spirit, to salute and to worship every form of the good. Nevertheless, Spinoza was not a complete humanist. He had no idea of human greatness and no sympathy with human sorrow. His notion of the soul was too plebeian and too quietistic. He was a Jew not of *Exodus* or *Kings* but of Amsterdam. He was too Dutch, too much the merchant and artisan, with nothing of the soldier, the poet, the prince, or the lover. Had he ever read Plutarch? Could he have relished Shakespeare or Racine? Could Virgil or Dante mean anything to him? Now such limitations, deep as they run, do not at all annul the nobility of Spinoza's simple and brave life, devoted to sublime speculation; yet they destroy the authority of his judgment in moral matters. He was virtuous but not normal. He had found his vocation, which it was his right and duty to follow; a high but very special vocation, that made him a model neither for mankind at large nor for man in his wholeness. He was a genius; but as a guide in the spiritual life, he was narrow and inadequate. The saint and the poet are hardly sane or authoritative unless they embody a wide tradition. If they are rebels, disinherited and solitary, the world may admire but cannot follow them. They have studied human nature by looking at the stars. (*Persons and Places* [1986] 23536)

One wonders just why this passage was excised from the original printings of *Persons and Places*; most cuts had to do with

sparing the sensibilities of family or friendsor even avoiding possible libel suits. Perhaps Daniel Cory, or someone at Scribner's, decided that any severity with Spinoza put Santayana in a bad light or that his words represented a thoughtless retraction of his own profoundest convictions. Actually, it is no more than a statement, uncompromising in its clarity, of reservations found scattered elsewhere in his writings. As early as *Reason in Religion*, first published in 1905, he had included a passage that (with some irony) managed to convey his understanding of the revulsion with which the synagogue of Amsterdam had viewed Spinozaa passage that was among those deleted from the one-volume *Life of Reason* (1954); it would be good to know whether Santayana himself mandated the excision or whether it reflects

an editorial anxiety on the part of Daniel Cory to lend a spurious perfection of consistency to Santayana's views. In any case, the passage proves that Santayana was not obsequious in his discipleship of Spinoza.

> It was only by a scandalous heresy that Spinoza could so change the idea of God as to make him indifferent to his creatures; and this transformation, in spite of the mystic and stoical piety of its author, passed very justly for atheism; for that divine government and policy had been denied by which alone God was made manifest to the Hebrews. (145)

There is no confusion, insincerity, or double-dealing here; Santayana continued to trust Spinoza as the bedrock for his philosophical edifice. But for the nave and the porch, the transepts and the clerestory, and especially for the ornament, he knew that he had to go elsewhere.

4
The Realm of Essence

The notion of Nonentity may thus be called the parent of the philosophic craving in its subtlest and profoundest sense.
William James, *"The Sentiment of Rationality"*

Beginning with this chapter and continuing into the next, borrowing even the titles from two volumes of Santayana's *Realms of Being*, I will sketch out as much of his philosophy as may be needed to support my discussion of *The Last Puritan*.

It is no easy job to state clearly what Santayana meant when he discussed *essence*, despite his having devoted hundreds of pagesscattered through more than a dozen booksin an effort to explain it. Careful and sympathetic attempts by others to define or explain what he meant never met with his entire approval, and in the course of his writings he gradually modified his own conceptions. As with many other key terms, *essence* comes to stand for a concept that is quite different from anything implied in ordinary speech or even in philosophical discourse. Proceeding initially by a *via negativa*, we can say that by *essence* he does *not* mean the grounds or cause of existence; nor a substance distinct from its attributes; nor the totality of indispensable attributes that define an existent being; nor the formal cause, idea, or real substance of anything; nor anything abstracted, purified, or refined from actual existence. The use of *essence* in logic to mean "undeniable attributes" comes closer to Santayana's meaning. But, as with *psyche*, *grammar*, *truth*,

hypostasis, and other terms, one requires repeated encounters with his use of *essence* to understand just what he means. Santayana does not supply definitions; as we read him, terms present themselves to us, much as the essences themselves do, and we come to know them intuitively.

Santayana is stingy when it comes to giving specific examples of essences, but one takes them to mean the immediate, undeniable data of experience, including emotion, awareness of personality, and pain, as well as color, mathematical relations, textures, musical chordsthe infinity of qualities that either mind or extended matter may manifest to the attentive consciousness. And

though matter exists and displays the essences, they themselves do not exist and do not exercise power over matter. This distinguishes him from Spinoza, who believed that all possible essences necessarily did manifest themselves in actual existence, and from Plato, whose forms, to judge from what he says in the *Timaeus*, actively shaped chaotic matter. From his earliest days as a philosopher, Santayana held tenaciously to this point of view, and it caused strains in his intellectual relations with other members of the Harvard philosophy department for whom essence and existence were not so easily separable.

One of his earlier elucidations of essence appears in "The Philosophy of Mr. Bertrand Russell," the review that compelled Russell to change his mind on fundamental questions about morality. In 1911 Santayana wrote:

> To penetrate to the foundation of being is possible for us only because the foundation of being is distinguishable quality; were there no set of differing characteristics, one or more of which an existing thing might appropriate, existence would be altogether impossible. The realm of essence is merely the system or chaos of these fundamental possibilities, the catalogue of all exemplifiable natures; so that any experience whatsoever must tap the realm of essence and throw the light of attention on one of its constituent forms." (*Winds of Doctrine* 122)

The terms that first arrest one's notice here are *possibility*, *exemplify*, and *form*. Anyone who has made the effort to feel at home, if only temporarily, with Platonic forms, might begin to be confident of making rapid strides in understanding Santayana if this were all there was to it. Here, essences sound as if they are the determinants of existence, or else represent the preexisting

forms that manifest themselves imperfectly in matter. The troublesome word is *natures*: it would be easy to misapprehend it as referring to the consequence of joining form to matter rather than as synonymous (here) with *essences*. We must stop to reflect that one use of the word *nature* is to designate an essential and distinctive quality. Further attention to the first sentence reveals that existences appropriate their essences and not the other way around. Indeed, in the same essay, he said: "Essence as such has no power to reveal itself, or to take on existence; and the human mind has no power or interest to trace all essence" (120).

He continually stresses the ineffectuality of essence, and this is one way in which he keeps his views distinct from those of Plato. In "My Earlier and Later Philosophy," he writes, "Apart from the events they may figure in, these essences have no existence; and since the realm of essence, by definition, is infinitely comprehensive and without bias, it can exercise no control over the existing world, nor determine what features shall occur in events, or in what order" (*Works* [Triton Ed.] 7: xiii).

In the effort to place oneself on more familiar ground, one may then fall back on the word *possibility*, which appears several times in the early essay on Russell and which seems there at least tangentially synonymous with *essence*. In the essay on Shelley in the same volume, Santayana writes:

> Eternal Possibilities may indeed beckon; they may attract those who instinctively pursue them as a star may guide those who wish to reach a place over which it happens to shine. But an eternal possibility has no material power. It is only one of an infinity of things equally possible intrinsically, yet most of them quite unrealisable in this world of blood and mire. The realm of eternal essences rains down no Jovian thunderbolts, but only a ghostly Uranian calm. (*Winds of Doctrine* 185)

The language here is reminiscent of some lines and images in Yeats's poem "Byzantium"though for Yeats the realm of essence would have been a lifeless abstraction.

Some years later, Santayana became uneasy with the word *possibility* when speaking of essences, feeling that even to mention possibility is to imply potentiality or actuality: "The word 'possible' is slippery and treacherous. It is commonly applied to anything that the speaker can readily imagine, especially when he is ignorant whether it is a fact or not. . . . The terms 'possible' and 'impossible' have, then, no proper application in the realm of essence" (*Realm of Essence* 2627). These quotations from 1927 might seem to have disposed of the word *possible* for good; but it creeps back in ten years later with the publication of *The Realm of Truth*: "It may be noticed in passing that essences are not intrinsically predicates or adjectives, but primordial and distinct forms of possible being" (24).

Perhaps Santayana felt that the word *being* precluded any misunderstanding of *possible* in this context. He had always been careful to discriminate the meanings of *existing* and *being*, sometimes by using *subsist* to suggest a kind of reality that did not necessarily involve existence. Those who are in the habit of assuming the objective reality of such things as mathematical formulas, moral imperatives, divine attributes, or intellectual categories are likely to stumble over all these terms (*being*, *subsisting*, *existing*) as Santayana uses them. For Santayana, existence always involves material actuality, and it is in this sense that he is a materialist.

Eventually even the word *subsist* began to weigh too heavily. *The Realm of Spirit* (1940) includes this sentence: "Essences have no hidden temporal persistence; their so-called subsistence is merely their logical identity" (100). In "Apologia Pro Mente Sua," he attempts to disburden his concept of this residual bag-

gage and to clarify once and for all the chasm that separates him from Platonic grossness:

> An essence is anything definite capable of appearing or being thought of; the existence of something possessing that essence is an ulterior question irrelevant to logic and to aesthetics. Misunderstanding is therefore redoubled if you say that I believe in *eternal* essences; because the reader, if not the writer, is likely to take "eternal essences" to mean everlasting substances; whereby my doctrine is blown sky-high into the Platonic heaven of magnetic forces, intelligences, or deities, astrologically guiding the fortunes of men and of nations. I am turned into a friend of outworn superstitions, when I am no friend even of the superstitions that prevail today.
>
> An insidious remnant of such Platonic mythology adheres to the notion of essences when these are said to *subsist*. Subsistence means latent duration, and duration means steady persistence in time; but the eternity intrinsic to all essences is timeless. (527)

The note of exasperation in these paragraphs reflects Santayana's feeling that he ought to have made himself sufficiently clear in his previous writings. The problem may have been that few even among professional philosophers had ever read all the way through his *Realm of Essence* and, from his point of view, no one had quite succeeded in grasping what he intended there. The language also suggests that he may have been attempting to distance himself from Whitehead's concept of *eternal objects*, a notion that does seem a close approach to Santayana's essences. But his main concern had been to make a sharp distinction between his doctrine and Plato's. Unlikely as it may sound, it was with the help of James's pragmatic approach that Santayana

managed to go beyond Platonism. James, who was famous for damning the "Absolute" and who "absolutely rejected" the Platonism in Santayana, had written in 1879, "The Absolute is what has not yet been transcended, criticised, or made relative. So far from being something quintessential and unattainable as is so often pretended, it is practically the most familiar thing in life" (*Collected Essays and Reviews* 129). In the same essay ("The Sentiment of Rationality"), James spoke of the "bottom of Being" as a "*datum* in the strict sense of the word" (128). These phrases, or something similar delivered orally by James, must have been in the back of Santayana's mind when he wrote:

> The type of being which I call essence has long been familiar to philosophers, and it is unfamiliar to the man in the street, not because it is too remote from him but because it is too near. I might almost say that my theory is a variant of Platonism, designed to render Platonic logic and

> morals consistent with the facts of nature. I am afraid, however, that this readjustment unhinges Platonism so completely that I have no right to call my doctrine Platonic. In the realm of essence as I conceive it, the sphere of Socratic Ideas is infinitely extended and freed from all confusion with natural forces. I am no pupil of Plato's in all that phase of his thought in which he seems simply to supply the lack of a cosmology by turning moral and ideal terms into supernatural powers. (*Realm of Essence* 155)

Yet his way of using, or defining, the word *form* in *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*which was also published in 1927makes one inevitably think of Plato. "They [the Platonists] thought the infinite formlessa conception which is possible only in the absence of concentration upon that idea; for, when considered intently, the infinite is seen to contain all forms: it is the realm of essence" (283). Platonic forms, then, would seem to qualify as essencesto which he would add others: "But, if his [Plato's] sense for the eternal had been absolute direct and pure, he would have seen the eternal in the figments of sense, no less than in logic or ethics: for all forms equally are essences, and all essences equally are eternal" (306).

Chapter 6 of *The Realm of Essence* begins in a way that equates forms with essences: "Since any essence is an eternal form of being, each is grounded in itself without reference to any other. Thus the realm of essence is an infinite plenum or continuum, in which every essence is surrounded by others differing infinitesimally from it in character" (78).

It appears that Santayana was willing to subsume the Platonic theory of ideas or forms to his own theory of essences, provided it was clear that there are many more essences than there are

Platonic ideas and that all the Platonic ideas are emasculated. Power inheres in matter, not in essence. In *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, he had spoken disapprovingly of those who do not recognize this:

> [T]he dialectician can easily become an idealist of the Platonic type, by conceiving that the substance of things is not the moving matter that today is one thing and to-morrow another, and that never is anything perfectly, but that this matter is only what the voice is to a song, or a book to its message or spirita treacherous and subordinate vehicle of expression; whereas the true object to look for, the source of applicability of words to facts at all, is the eternal nature which the actual thing may illustrate. (222)

The effort at keeping his own views in precisely the correct relation to Plato's had occupied Santayana from the beginning of his career as a philosopher. As Paul Grimley Kuntz has shown (in the lengthy introduction to the pub-

lished edition of Santayana's dissertation on the philosophy of Lotze), the numerous marginalia in the copies of Lotze's works that Santayana used include comments intended to distinguish his own view of Plato from that of Lotze. Briefly, Santayana felt that Lotze had improperly criticized Platonic forms or ideas as mere abstractions drawn from reality; in other words, Lotze was in some ways an Aristotelian. Santayana, for his part, felt that Plato erred in the other direction but that at least Plato's ideas did represent ideals, goals of thought, transcending material existences and not abstracted from them. Plato's error was to attribute to his *ideas* power over matter. The extent to which Santayana has been misread, misunderstood, and generally neglected is nowhere more clear than on this point, where he tenaciouslyover a sixty-year periodinsisted on a fundamental modification of Platonic doctrine, and yet as recently as 1982 he could be described as "the Platonist George Santayana" (A. J. Ayer's sole reference to him in *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*).

Santayana's insistence on the powerlessness of the essences was emphatic; the fact that the entirety of the quotation above (from *Scepticism and Animal Faith*) is only part of one sentence proves the urgency of his conviction. It also shows how he preempts argument with wave upon wave of eloquent assertion. The flood is upon us in the next paragraph; here he flings angelic sarcasms at the Platonic point of view that, by attributing power to forms, materializes the very realm that it seeks to raise beyond material and temporal causation:

> Things should have only the barely necessary matter in them, and that wholly obedient to the mastering form. What am I saying? Need

> things have any matter in them at all? What could be more ideal than the idea itself, or more perfect than the function exercised by magic, and without an instrument? Away, then, with all material embodiments, even if these embodiments seem perfect for a moment. Fly, then, to the heaven of ideas, absolute and eternal, as the realm of essence contains them. There at last you will find the substance which in this world of phenomena you sought in vain. (223)

To deny the reality and power of substance (or matter), he is saying, is to reestablish or rediscover substance in the wrong place. Elsewhere he speaks of this as the "mythologizing" tendency of Platonism. Since it is not always clear, in Plato, just exactly how the objects of common experience participate in their eternal forms, it may be that Santayana overstates this side of Platonism. But the account in the *Timaeus* of forms does seem to attribute to them a causative or shaping power over chaotic matter. And everywhere, the forms do seem to be

the models, or archetypes, imperfectly realized in matter, whereas Santayana's essences are undeniable qualities that matter may assume and that may be intuited by the attentive mind (which is itself constituted of matter). The real existence of anything in the realm of matter can only be accepted on faith, but the intuition of essencesthe givenis undeniable and immediate. It is not the result of a philosophical pursuit of a transcendental heaven filled with ideal forms, in which resides the poweror some kind of authorityexercised over recalcitrant and corrupting matter.

On the contrary, asserts Santayana, the power to realize any ideal (or essence) is to be found in substance (or matter). Matter actualizes essences in its blind effort to take some form or other; it finds use for essences in the harmonizing of its own restless energies. The essences themselvesinfinite, eternal, changeless, differing in such slight degrees as to be virtually continuousmay seem to beckon and attract matter to appropriate them and may give matter the character that it takes on, once they have been assumed by matter. But "nowhere else, and not for a moment longer, does any eternal essence possess any authority, express any aspiration, or even seem to exercise any power" (*Scepticism and Animal Faith* 224).

> Essence . . . much more truly *is* than any substance or any experience or any event. . . . Essence is just that character which any existence wears in so far as it remains identical with itself and so long as it does so; the very character which it throws overboard by changing, and loses altogether when it becomes something else. To be able to become something else, to suffer change and yet endure, is the privilege of experience, be it a substance, an event, or an experience;

> whereas essences can be exchanged, but not changed. (*Realm of Essence* 23)

It also bothered Santayana that the Platonic theory of forms seemed to carry into his own realm of essence too many of the features of actual existence. It is the same kind of objection that he raises to conventional Christian ideas about the afterlifethat the Christian heaven is nothing but an imaginary continuation or projection of the most desirable features of earthly existence, and that it is presumptuous of human beings to impose their values in this way. Since Santayana seldom cites specific texts when he is criticizing Platonism, it is not easy to see to what extent he takes into account Plato's own modifications of his doctrine. The objections that confuse Socrates in the *Parmenides* point in the direction of Santayana's own views: if you are going to have *forms* at all, there must also be forms of dirt, hair, and manure as well as truth, justice, and beauty.

The most refined and elevated human concerns have more in common with the grimy facts of existence than with what is truly eternal. Bertrand Russell, in his treatment of Plato in *A History of Western Philosophy*, emerges as an unlikely ally of Santayana when he says: "He [Plato] fails altogether to realize how great is the gap between universals and particulars; his 'ideas' are really just other particulars, ethically and aesthetically superior to the ordinary kind" (127). Russell provides additional grounds for the support of Santayana's essences a little further on in the discussion of Plato: "The distinction between reality and appearance cannot have the consequences attributed to it by Parmenides and Plato and Hegel. If appearance really appears, it is not nothing, and is therefore part of reality; this is an argument of the correct Parmenidean sort. If appearance does not really appear, why trouble our heads about it?" (129). Russell's word *appearances* is at least a plausible substitute for Santayana's *essences*.

Even more important to Santayana's point of view than Plato was Spinoza, though he separated himself sharply from Spinoza's statement in proposition 7, part 1, of the *Ethics*: "Existence belongs to the nature of substance. Proof: Substance cannot be produced by anything else and is therefore self-caused; that is, its essence necessarily involves existence; that is, existence belongs to its nature." Santayana states the oppositethat existence is merely something that may happen to an essence, and that essences are by no means limited to those which may happen to have been exemplified in matter:

> Again, we find Spinoza asserting that the entire nature of beingwhich he actually calls substancemust be manifested in

> existence, and that all these manifestations must be parallel to the forms of the material world, of which indeed those other manifestations can be only complementary aspects, by chance known to us. Here is the cosmic frog prodigiously swollen in rivalry with the ontological ox; but the ox, lest that ambition should seem too absurd, is accommodated to the frog nature, and pure Being is thought of as a sort of matter or force resident in natural things and lending them their existence, while at the same time enriching them with an infinite number of attributes which they hide from view. (*Realm of Essence* 5152)

Two things about Spinoza's treatment of essence appealed to Santayana. First was the authority accorded to substanceto *Deus sive natura*and to what Santayana termed Spinoza's consciousness of "the divine right of the real." Second, Spinoza asserted that God (or nature) possessed an infinity of attributes, and this buttressed Santayana's notion of the infinite number of essences. The

difference between the two philosophers is, first, (as noted above) that Spinoza contended that every attribute (or essence) does manifest itself in extended existence while Santayana posited that there was no necessary existence of essences. Second, according to Spinoza, only two such attributes are known to us, extension and mind; but infinite others exist. These are the two aspects or attributes of God/nature that manifest themselves to us directly. Santayana, on the contrary, thought that any number of essences (though by no means all) might present themselves directly to intuition.

Santayana felt keenly the uniqueness of his point of view and especially how out of place he was, as a member of the Harvard Philosophy Department, in holding it. "It was moralism, not logic, that led Royce to deprecate my separation of essence from existence. They are separable and even contrary logically, since any essence is eternally identical with itself, while existing things suffer continual and treacherous mutation" ("Apologia" 502).

The phrase "continuous and treacherous mutation" resounds like a gong summoning up the ages-old conception of sublunary nature, in which the four elements blend in endless contention and from which the exasperated spirit aspires toward the contemplative calm of the quintessence overhead. It likewise could describe American restlessness, the unending bustle, renovation, rebuilding, projecting, improvingthe creed of interminable progress. It could describe the self-tormented wrestling of the Protestant spirit with itself and the conviction that duty requires one to urge such perpetual self-reformation on others. It describes a life marked by physical dislocations and

emotional deracinations. The realm of matter tosses us about with its irrational surgesand yet it wears, at every instant, features that are eternal and that we may contemplate with clam detachment. In short, we may argue that Santayana's theory of matter and of essences (we may so call it, though he held it too obvious to be a theory) is consonant with his own life and personality. So to argue is not to diminish or to explain away his point of view. Indeed, the great merit of his view is that it does take into account the transitory, confused, and yet continually aspiring human spirit.

Bertrand Russell gave some thought to explaining Santayanian essences in terms of their author's personality. Daniel Cory, with Boswellian tactlessness, brought him Russell's conclusions:

> I must have become weary of "essences," for I record in my diary how I upset Santayana by repeating something that Russell had once said to me after a lecture in London.

> "Do you know," I butted in, "that Russell now feels [in 1929] that all of this talk about 'essences' is due to emotional privation?"
>
> Santayana was definitely shocked, and our conversation came to a dead halt. It must have taken him several moments before he spoke again, and then only to observe coolly:
>
> I suppose Bertie now feels that my realm of essence is just a monk's dream. (Cory 45)

Since Cory came to know Santayana far better than did Russell, his further observations on this occasion are worth noting, especially since they are amply supported not only in Santayana's autobiographical writings but even in the choice of language in his more formal philosophy. After explaining that early contact with Russell and with G. E. Moore had helped bring out Santayana's Platonic streak, Cory continues:

> No doubt there was a large grain of truth in Russell's remark on the effect of "emotional privation" on the subsistence of universals. He was generalizing from personal experience. As for Santayana, I feel certain that all of his life he had been immedicably homesick for a more congenial and beautiful worlda world he could only imagine in the great "might-have-been" of an infinite realm of possibilities. But this was only *one* side of the man. On the other side he was adaptable to circumstances, realistic and very Spanish; he acknowledged more frankly than any other contemporary philosopher the primordial causal authority of the realm of matter. There were no theological compensations in his official doctrine. Matter was largely indifferent to human aspirations and Truth an impartial registration of all events. (46)

The process of emotional detachment that I shall trace in detail in chapter 6 can now be seen as the necessary groundworkor the

simultaneous manifestation in a personalityof the theory of essences. In the paragraphs that follow, I will show how thoroughly Santayana's own experience underlies this part of his philosophy. I believe that Santayana understood both himself and his philosophy with a thoroughness that makes it quite unlikely thatshould we wish towe will succeed in second-guessing him on either account. But the better we understand him, the more we will appreciate his philosophy, and vice-versa. We will think of him not as useless, effete, supercilious, distant, uninvolved, and contemptuous, but more like a cultivated bachelor uncle who likes his privacy. To let him speak for himself, here are two passages from "My Friendly Critics," which first appeared in *Later Soliloquies* in 1922:

> I do not mind being occasionally denounced for atheism, conceit, or detachment. One has to be oneself; and so long as the facts are not misrepresentedand I have little to complain of on that score-any judgment based upon them is a two-edged sword: people simply condemn what condemns them. I can always say to myself that my atheism, like that of Spinoza, is true piety towards the universe and denies only gods fashioned by men in their own image, to be servants of their human interests; and even in that denial I am no rude iconoclast, but full of secret sympathy with the impulses of idolaters. My detachment from things and persons is also affectionate, and simply what the ancients called philosophy. . . .
>
> I do not ask any one to *believe* in essences. I ask them to reject every belief, and what they will have on their hands, if they will do so, will be some essence. And if, believing nothing, they could infinitely enlarge their imagination, the whole realm of essence would loom before them. This realm is no discovery of mine; it has been described, for instance, by Leibnitz in two different ways; once as the collection of all possible worlds, and again as the abyss of non-existence, *le néant*, of which he says: "The non-existent . . . is infinite, it is eternal, it has a great many of the attributes of God; it contains an infinity of things, since all those things which do not exist at all are included in the non-existent, and those which no longer exist have returned to the non-existent." (*Soliloquies in England* 24647, 256)

Russell's blunt expression "emotional privation" may help to chop through to something central in the interrelation of Santayana's essences and his personality, but it can hardly do so without damaging the finer structure of his feelings. Russell seemed to feel that he had chosen to be emotionally deprived; one can hardly blame Santayana for the fact that even the more attenuated connections, which might have provided some

compensation, failed him. In 1893 Warwick Potter died suddenly, a young man with whom he had "formed the most unclouded and heartfelt of my American friendships" (*Middle Span* 108). He also took it quite hard when his half sister, Susana, made what he considered a dull and unsuitable marriage; she had in considerable degree supplied the maternal tenderness that he had never felt. And there was more:

> A twelvemonth before, my sister Susana had been married; that summer my father had died; and the death of Warwick now came to accentuate the effect of these mutations and to make them aware of the meaning for my spiritual life. I shall return later to this my *metanoia*. Nothing apparently was much changed in my surroundings, opinions, or habits; yet the public world was retreating to a greater distance and taking on a new and more delicate coloring. . . .

> . . . These relations of mine with younger spirits were all cut short by early separations. That was in the nature of things, because friends should be contemporaries. But I was divided from my contemporaries by initial divergences of race, country, religion, and career. (10910)

And, he could have added here, he was himself divided from the things by which he had been, initially, divided from others: he was no longer a Spaniard, a Catholic, or even a comfortable disciple of his American mentors in what should have been the borderless empery of philosophy. No new connections presented themselvesor if they did, they were tenuous or soon severed. He had, most prematurely, suffered double or triple emotional removals, telescoping into a decade what many experience as normal adolescence and the now-celebrated "mid-life crisis," together with other abandonments and bereavements. And more lay ahead: his long-anticipated termination of his official Harvard career and his unwilling but resigned acknowledgment that his unofficial career as a poet was a failure (he ceased to write poetry). It was natural that he should turn increasingly toward eternal things, though retaining a vigor of intelligence, memory, and imagination that did not desert him before his death a half-century later. The chapter from *The Middle Span*, from which the last few quotations come, concludes with a sentence that marks the point at which his philosophy became more important to him than life itselfa transition from life to philosophy: "And in each person I catch the fleeting suggestion of something beautiful, and swear eternal friendship with that" (111). For us, this may also provide a bridge in the other direction, linking his philosophy with his life and character.

To begin with, the essences are intimately connected with immediate human (or animal) experience: "The intuition of a simple essence is called a feeling; and the essence given in a primitive feeling is likely to be some truly simple, quite stupid, essence, such as sheer intensity. . . . It may be a whiff of emotion; it may be a perception; it may be a moral sentiment redolent of a thousand high thoughts and profound tragedies: in each case it will be a complete apparition, born at that moment and dying with it" (*Realm of Essence* 146). The problem with the essences, according to Santayana, is not that they are remote and unfamiliar, but that they are too close to us, in all our experience. We encounter them constantly but fail to observe that this intuition is occurring. To be aware of what is going on requires attention free from distraction. It requires the focusing of awareness on the immediate data of experience; it requires contemplative detachment. What we see in Santayana's discussion of essence is the work of a mind that operated not in a void or in a realm of abstractions, but one that

attempted to engage, at each moment, as many fugitive impressions as possible. But to achieve this kind of attentiveness is possible only in the isolation of the laboratory, the library study, the studio, or, in Santayana's case, the quiet apartment or hotel suite. Anyone who has experienced acute seasickness, as Santayana did in his numerous transatlantic voyages, will also recall the vividness with which the consciousness apprehends, from the vantage of a cabin bunk, the minutely differentiated rust stains, paint spots, creakings, hints of odors, and unnatural motions within one's viscera. In short, the philosophy of essence is the philosophy of the isolated consciousness, awake, attentive, keenly aware of its immediate intuitions and of its own identity. To put it this way is not to represent it as eccentric, abnormal, or impractical; isolation of consciousness together with intense self-awareness is common enough in experience, though not often valued or cultivated, and Santayana explores this region exhaustively. Here, as in his life, is a double or triple remove; his philosophy is an extended meditation on the act of perception itself. That preoccupation, together with the aloofness of the point of view, puts Santayana as a philosopher in company with his contemporaries in the arts and sciences who have concerned themselves with the acts of cognition in their own specialities.

One thinks of Paul Valéry's poem, "Le Cimitière Marin," where Olympian detachment combines with sensuous immediacy in a work that explores the grounds of its own creation. It is hard to imagine a philosophy such as Santayana's taking shape without a half-century of mornings, and sometimes afternoons and evenings, spent in comfortable isolation from most human cares and connections. We must not begrudge Santayana his peace and

quiet if we are to recognize the part that it plays in the elaboration of his thoughtan elaboration that few have cared to investigate. And yet we must insist on the relevance of these meditations to our own experience, however distracted we may be by our more mundane concerns.

Another way to explain the essences in terms of Santayana's life and personality is to recognize, as Daniel Cory did in his conversations with the philosopher, that his very choice of language betrays an overpowering longing for permanence: " [T]he realm of essence, in its perfect catholicity, is placid and safe and the same whatever may happen in earth or heaven" (*Realm of Essence* 82). From time to time, he speaks of the "friendliness" of the realm of essence, and this may remind us not only of the importance of friends to Santayana (no one ever had more, and of such variety) but of the way in which he perceived each personality as a distinct qualityan instance of what he termed a "complex essence." Intuiting the realm of essence in some ways must have been like re-

ceiving the visitors who, throughout his life, presented themselves to his attentionor like receiving the mail that poured in from his numerous correspondents, most of whom he seems to have answered.

It seems clear that Santayana conceived of himself as a distinct essence. He speaks of the "perfect and eternal individuality of every complex essence" and adds, "I am speaking of something homeless in the world though visiting me under the gracious influence of this place and hour; I am speaking of essence" (*Realm of Essence* 76). Another quotation may indicate the direction in which Santayana was moving and may capture something of the emotion that the contemplation of essences excited in him: "The realm of essence, then, while it is infinite, continuous, and compact, nevertheless leaves each of its elements entirely alone and self-centered; it is the home of indelible multiplicity and eternal individuality" (91).

It might do to turn Bertrand Russell's observation around and, in place of its Freudian meanness, say that Santayana, alienated and detached from ordinary human intimacies, passed beyond them to the region of pure being in which he experienced a joy of reunion that, for many believing Christians, is the happiest aspect of their hope of heaven. The mood of the chapter titled "The Essence of Pure Being" in places resembles that of the concluding cantos of Dante's *Paradiso*, though at the end he returns, with the Spanish shrewdness remarked by Cory, to earth: "As for me, I frankly cleave to the Greeks and not to the Indians, and I aspire to be a rational animal rather than a pure spirit" (*Realm of Essence* 65). In "The Philanthropist" from *Dialogues*

in Limbo, however, he allows Socrates to speak for hima Socrates reanimated under Santayana's new dispensation and no longer given to vulgar mythologizing; and here we feel the way in which the realm of essence has taken the place of this transient and disappointing panorama of existences. This is the realm to which he felt he belongednot to one into which he had been born and which made him, at the end of his life, regret that he had existed. As the dialogue nears its conclusion, we read:

> *The Stranger.* The men of my time would not relish your regimen.
>
> *Socrates.* Nor did those of my time relish it. They loved anything and everything better than humanity. They had their way: abandoning their cities to ruin, neglecting to breed noble children, and to train them nobly, they became troops of ranging animals, with a homeless and dreaming mind. Those who now dwell on earth are not men but anthropoids; and when their race, too, is extinctfor it will soon destroy itselfif your friendly spirit happily survives, pray bring me the pleasant tidings; for humanity is immortal, and although matter for a season may lapse from

> that form, and the race may seem extinguished, the forgotten pattern is still inviolate in heaven, inviting and summoning that wayward substance to resume its possible beauty; nor can such divine magic be resisted for ever. (160)

The divine magic proved irresistible to Santayana for nearly sixty years. "What could the Olympians honour in one another or the seraphim worship in God except the embodiment of eternal attributes, of essences which, like beauty, make us happy only in contemplation?" (*Sense of Beauty* 29) he asked in 1896. Since the essences here were spoken of as embodied, one may imagine the realm of essence as something more rarefied than heaven itself. Thirty years later, we find him still at home among his friends:

> If a thing is finite either inwards or outwards, forward or back, a scale may be fixed by which it may be internally measured. But in the realm of essence all such foothold fails for human prerogative. Here every degree of complexity is as calmly enthroned as every other: none is more primitive or natural or safe than the rest, since all are necessary and all are eternal. The most agitated *Paradiso* ever painted by Tintoretto, the most insane *Walpurgisnachtstraum*, is as elementary and fundamental an essence as the number one or the straight line. (*Realm of Essence* 142)

Finally, near the end of his life, writing on questions of law, politics, economics, and society in *Dominations and Powers* (1951), he felt it necessary to frame his inquiries once more in terms of the essencesand in so doing betrayed the attraction that this changeless company exercised on him. This ultimate restatement of his doctrine takes us back to his earlier struggles with various terms, including the discarded word *possible*, which

he is now willing to allow not only to designate the most refined existences but also essences. By the time that he wrote *Dominations and Powers*, modern physics, especially mathematical relativity theory, had refined the concept of existence to a point where it was safe for him to insist less pertinaciously on the gap separating existence from essence. Although he had not found Whitehead's concept of the unified phenomenon of object/observer to be satisfactory, Santayana, at this late date, was eager to reduce to the smallest possible degree the dualism implicit in most of his writings.

In working out what he believes to be the parallels between his own thought and that of Einstein (as he conceives Einstein), Santayana may well be reverting to the two fundamental categories of Spinozathe essences knowable to us: thought and extension. To Einstein he resigns extension, and for himself he claims thought (in Spinoza's terms). We might say that Santayana feels that

he has investigated the nature of spirit, which we may want to call "consciousness," and found there an aspect of the universe as fundamental as mathematical relativity. How seriously to take this depends, among other things, on whether human life continues on earth and whether enough people read and profit from Santayana's work to decide if he has indeed established his claim. Santayana's lifebalanced between contemplative isolation and multitudinous friendly contacts with other centers of consciousnessreflects and is reflected in his philosophy. In particular, in the following passage, notice the terms in which he expresses himself"the peaceful realm of essence" and "animate creatures, jostling and devouring one another in this world." Much of his personality inheres in the choice of languagethe language of an aloof, fastidious, retiring sage for whom, in this world, there was much friendship but no intimacy.

> Einstein, however, if I understand him, tells us that the principle of existence is Relativity itself. Now relations may be of two different kinds. They may be logical and necessary, as between ideal terms, each intrinsically definite, definable, changeless, and complementary to all other ideal terms, in the peaceful realm of essence. Or on the contrary, relations may be material and accidental, as between things and animate creatures, jostling and devouring one another in the world. That relations of this second sort are the principle of existence had occurred to me in my mathematical ignorance simply by reflecting on the doctrines of Plato and Heraclitus. For essences (or ideal and definite forms of being) become temporary qualities of an existing thing or passing event when, in contempt of their eternal relations to other senses, they find themselves irrelevantly crowded together, usurped by matter, or flashing out and extinguished irrationally in the flux of thought. Einstein casts his theory in other terms; yet he says

> something that by chance coincides with a point that is crucial in my thinking. Relations are between terms; and these terms, for him, are ultimately pure mathematical centres where cosmic relations cross and combine. The centres have not substance of their own, as had the monads of Leibnitz, which would have ceased to exist if they had stopped thinking or dreaming or at least positively sleeping. But for Einstein no positive intrinsic existence belongs to these centres. Their essence is to be *possible* foci for all dynamic influences in the universe; for though the net of these lines is describable mathematically, they are, for Einstein, paths of energy and the warp and woof of nature. (*Dominations and Powers* 12)

Here Santayana has finally disposed of the word *possible* by ceding one aspect of it to Einstein and to the realm of matterto Spinoza's extensional attribute

of God/nature. For himself, in the next paragraph, he claims spirit and essence, readmitting *possible* in order to claim for consciousness (*spirit*, for Santayana; *mind*, for Spinoza) an ontological status equal to that of extension:

> This seems to me remarkably parallel to what, in my view, is the potentiality of spirit in the heart of matter. Each point that becomes a centre for tensions from the whole cosmos had no prior existence, substance, or individuality, but is distinguishable only by the range and quality of the influences that meet in it, and passing through it, play as if from that centre upon the surrounding world. Just so should I conceive the spirit, essentially a merely possible locus for surveying the universe, to be actualized and individuated only as particular material tensions meet and form a centre for further diffusion of energy. An animal organism has this sort of functional unity. So long as it is alive it can react on things distant, past, or future and thereby evokes spirit. (1213)

There are, no doubt, those who would object that Santayana speaks in metaphors, who think that metaphorical expression is inexact and misleading. Those who labor with Baconian industry to rid language of ambiguity and to replace it with a system of logical indicators modeled on mathematics will fail to understand him. At the same time, there will be others so devoted to public or personal mythologies that they will conclude that, since Santayana is not with them unequivocally, he is perforce against them, and will fail to recognize that his defense of each creature's right to a point of view is crucial to their own. Santayana's acute consciousness of his own unique identity, and his willingness to accord the same identity to other essences, seems to them a lack of commitment and a sign of insincerity. Combining the two unflattering views, we might imagine that we have encountered

an elderly aesthete who cared for no one but himself and for whom the world of actualities was a bit too rough; who preferred to interpose a gauze of Paterian figures of speech between himself and world; for whom hard facts and strong feelings were equally repugnant. It is much nearer to the truth, however, to say that in his solitary mornings of quiet work and his solitary evenings of quiet contemplation, in his independence from permanent connections, whether personal or institutional, and in his condition of permanent homelessness and perpetual transiency, he succeeded in fixing his attention on the irreducible minutiae of immediate experience, inventing for himself an aesthetic calculus with which to manage this host of infinitesimal qualities that he called essences. His philosophy is an invitation to explore that side of universal experience which is unique to each spirit; it is therefore appropriate that it be intimately involved with his own life and char-

acterjust as it is appropriate that a cosmically applicable scientific principle be utterly independent of such connections. His is the individual point of view; he was willing to accept, with common-sense resignation, his role as poet *manqué* and to make the best of it by carrying into philosophical discourse the resources of poetry, to show what in our experience is unique to the human animal, simultaneously affirming both its importance and its utter relativity. The analogy between his realm of essences and the mathematical dimensions of a relativistic universe is not excessively fanciful.

5
The Realm of Matter

We shall see, as I take up the connections between Santayana's life, personality, and philosophy, that it is not difficult to connect his concept of matter (as an irrational flux) with his experiences as a child. The sources of his awareness of matter, or substance, were twofold and simultaneous. First, there was the experience of the variety and extent of the actual world; but in addition to that, paradoxically, there was his experience of closeness and confinement. Even in advance of looking more closely into the circumstances of his life, it may be well to insist on how even the most remote and abstract features of Santayana's thought were rooted in immediate and continuous personal experience. Very early on, it was borne in on him that material circumstances were real and important determinants of experiencethat one could be physically cut off from other persons and places and that there existed no mysterious continuum to link these distinct locations. Memory, of course, was possible; anticipation was possible; but any emotional ties, any nostalgia, any operation of the mind or spirit, though it might bear the imprint of distant circumstances, could not transcend those material occasions and indeed grew out of them. This may seem obvious to innocent common sense, but idealistic philosophies had been maintaining the reverse for two centuries.

Santayana's horizons were extended even further, beyond the large regions encompassed in his own experience, by his

awareness of the truly extraordinary (for the times) globe-trotting of his parents:

> From childhood I have lived in the imaginative presence of interminable ocean spaces, coconut islands, blameless Malays, and immense continents swarming with Chinamen, polished and industrious, obscene and philosophical. . . . My own travels have never carried me far from the frontiers of Christendom or of respectability, chiefly back and forth across the North Atlanticthirty-eight fussy voyages; but in mind I have seen these things on an ironical background enormously empty or breaking out in spots, like Polynesia. ("General Confession" 4)

But it was not only his early awareness of the dimensions of the physical world, and the possibilities for dislocation and separation therein, that im-

pressed on him the reality of material existence. Proximity itself became an agent of emotional distancing. He spent little time in that kind of self-forgetful play with children his own age in which the individual personalities lose themselves and blend into an occasion of delight. Family life, in his experience, meant misunderstanding, misery, and a closeness that represented a violation of privacy rather than affectionate attachment. He felt both the pressing reality of existing physical bodies occupying space and, at the same time, the definite frontiers that separated these bodies from one another. He could not conceive of his having brought such bodies, with their intrusive externality, into existence through any perceptive act of his own; he did not care to attribute such definitely foreign substances to his own imagination. He was not permitted, as most children are to some degree, partially to transform his parents (his were too remote and self-contained), brothers, and sisters (he had only half-siblings, remote in age from himself) into creatures of that imagination.

In later childhood, from the age of eight to twelve, he learned to associate physical space with time. Anyone who has listened to a child's "How far do we still have to go?" or who can remember what an eternity a five-hour automobile trip can seem to an eight-year-old may be able to guess the depths of tedium (or, anyway, the intense intuition of the time needed to traverse the space) of a long ocean voyage in the necessarily cramped circumstances of a sailing shipitself another instance of people caught in intimate separateness.

Family life among the Sturgises in Boston, where he was

transplanted just at a stage of development that made it impossible for new affections to really take hold, was not such as to permit emotional naturalization after his profound deracinations. After he was settled in Boston at the age of eight, "with my grown-up [half] brother and sisters, I was the only child. I played no games, but sat at home all afternoon and evening reading or drawing; especially devouring anything I could find that regarded religion, architecture, or geology" ("General Confession" 6).

But his distancing was at least as perceptual, even intellectual, as it was emotional; Santayana saw enough different landscapes, cities, types of human beings, modes of conveyancein short, he was introduced so early to the immense variety of the worldthat he saw how matter could take on many forms and how it could behave in different ways. These forms could act and react on and with one another and could induce changes in one another. He felt how physical surroundings could weigh upon the spirit, even as they brought that spirit into existence. He had seen enough of the entities and events, both physical and spiritual (the spiritual, for him, arising out of the material circumstances) to be quite satisfied that this universe contained all that was necessary to account for his existence and experience. He did not feel it necessary to imag-

ine anything stranger, more wonderful, more perfect, or more efficacious, and he felt perfectly certain that he was himself merely part of what he observed and not the creator of it. His own awareness of matter was a product of matter. After his arrival in America, it was borne in on him that his (Spanish, Catholic, prematurely disillusioned, emotionally reserved) point of view, though natural to him, was very different from most of those around him. He learned to see himself as a product of forces beyond himself in order to explain his own uniqueness, never imagining that he had brought himself into existence.

At the beginning of chapter 2 of *The Realm of Matter*, "Indispensable Properties of Substance," Santayana makes a list of such properties. He adds emphasis to certain phrases in this list. If one thinks of these statements as an expression of the point of view of a small boy dragged prematurely through the wide world and periodically jammed into cramped domesticity, there is a good deal of pathos in the words.

> *substance is external to the thought which posits it*
> *substance has parts and constitutes a physical space*
> *all the parts of substance are external to one another*
> *substance is in flux and constitutes a physical time*
> *substance is unequally distributed*
> *substance composes a relative cosmos*

The last of these requires further explanation, and Santayana provides this: "[A]ll recognisable substance must lie in the same field in which the organism of the observer occupies a relative centre." In the next paragraph, he restates his assertions:

> A mutual externality, or *Auseinanderseinan* alternation of centres

such as moment and moment, thing and thing, person and personis characteristic of existence. Each centre is equally actual and equally central, yet each is dependent on its neighbors for its position and on its predecessors for its genesis. The existential interval from one centre to another is bridged naturally by generation or motionby a transition actually taking place from one moment, place, or character to another, in such a manner that the former moment, place, or character is abandoned and lost. The same interval may still be bridged cognitively by faith or intent, faith being a substitute for a transition which cannot be executed materially, because the remote term of it is past or not next in the order to genesis or transformation. But *this interval can never be bridged by synthesis in intuition*. Synthesis in intuition destroys the existential status of the terms which it unites, since it excludes any alternation or derivation between them. [my emphasis] (1011)

The last two sentences show how careful Santayana is at every point to make clear that his admission of the reality of mental or spiritual facts does not mean that he has capitulated to any sort of transcendentalism; it is matter that wields the authority over spirit and not the other way around. Even a determined philosophical idealist should be willing to admit that her or his conception of *Santayana's* conception of the world would have to take into account the complexities of Santayana's own life and the uniqueness of his personality. Such a thinker could indulge in self-congratulation on the ingenuity with which he or she had imagined a creature and an intellectual situation of such complexity. This is not a fatuous fancy; the mathematician and physicist Eddington believed that he was creating the physical universe even as he observed and formulated it.

Before presenting us with the list of indispensable properties of matter, Santayana had made clear that animal faith is involved in their apprehension:

> The hunter and the hunted believe in something ambushed and imminent: present images are little to them but signs for coming events. Things are getting thick, agents are coming together, or disappearing: they are killing and dying. The assurance of this sort of belief is assurance of existence, and the belief in this sort of agent is belief in substance. If this belief and assurance are not illusions (which the acting animal cannot admit them to be) several properties must belong to substances and to the world they compose. (*Realm of Matter* 9)

This serves as a transition to the next chapter, in which he describes the "several properties" of substance:

It follows that substance is in flux, virtual if not actual. External relations are such as are due to the position, not to the inherent character of the terms. . . .

Something not essence, then, actualises and limits the manifestation of every essence that figures in nature or appears before the mind. To the dark principle of existence we give the name of substance; so that substance, by definition, is the soil, the medium, and the creative force which secretly determines any option. . . .

Undoubtedly the word substance suggests permanence rather than change, because the substances best known to man (like the milk and wet sand of the young architect) evidently pass from place to place and from form to form while retaining their continuity and quality. Such permanence is not contrary to flux, but a condition of flux. . . . If change were total at any point, there transformation and existence would come to an end. . . .

> Permanence, therefore, need not be set down separately among the radical properties attributed to substance: it is sufficiently expressed in the possibility of change, of continuity, of succession, and of the inclusion of actual events in a natural series, which shall not be a mere perspective in imagination.
>
> . . . In this flux there is a relative permanence and continuity; but substance is not for that reason less agitated than the familiar face of nature, or nearer to the impassibility of an eternal essence. (1418)

Toward the end of "Indispensable Properties," Santayana attempts to reinstate Aristotle as the ultimate physicist of his material universe, although elsewhere he characterized Aristotelian physics as an intellectual disaster. "The language of Spinoza about substance," he contends, "ought to yield, in physics, to that of Aristotle, in spite of the fact that a follower of Descartes could not help being more enlightened in mechanical matters than a follower of Socrates" (*Realm of Matter* 20). His reason for saying this appears to be thathowever erroneous Aristotle may have been in his particular applicationshe did carry human thought further in the direction toward the recognition of the real existence of other substantial beings, and of other centers of purpose and intelligence (which grow out of substance), than Spinoza's "ambiguous metaphysical object, now pure Being, now the universe in its infinity." His anxiousness to rehabilitate Aristotle is due to his concern that the whole concept of "moral centers" be preserved, so that we may preserve with it those values and ideals that are specifically human, national, and personal. Spinoza's universe, while authentic, perhaps undeniable, is somewhat impoverished. In an ebullient and incautious moment (after he had completed *The Realms of Being*

and was enjoying both the celebrity and the income from his extraordinary successes of the 1930s), Santayana wrote to Daniel Cory: "Spinoza's moral sentiments were plebeian, Dutch, and Jewish: perfectly happy in his corner, polishing his lenses, and saying, Great is Allah. No art, no high politics, no sympathy with greatness, no understanding of courage or of despair" (Cory 182). We should also recall that Spinoza's bare-bones universe involved, for Santayana, the denial of all essences that did not actually exist; that is, Spinoza believed that all possibilities for existence necessarily did exist. Santayana did not:

> Indeed, good sense might suffice to convince anyone that no arguments or definitions can prevent things from being as numerous and as separate as they may chance to be. There is an infinite diversity of essences: what shall dissuade the fatality of existence, which must be groundless, from composing such changeful systems as it likes, on planes of being utterly incommensurable and incommunicable? (*Realm of Matter* 24)

At the same time, he accepted Spinoza's argument that there is only one substance, but only to the extent that this was true of the particular universe in which we exist.

The line of thought in chapter 2 is unsettling because Santayana teeters considerably as he treads the tightrope. On one side lie the transcendental philosophers and the radical empiricists, who elevate their private perspectives to universal law. On the other side, we see a universe barren of consciousness, purpose, spirit. On one end of his balancing pole hangs Aristotle, whose residual self- or human-centeredness outweighs his scientific detachment; on the other end, we find suspended Spinoza, with a philosophy that depresses the exuberance of the individual creature, or at least diminishes (to nothing) the importance of its outlook. Ahead of him lie the infinity of essences, and behind him, the unity of the substantial world to which we happen to belong. There are qualifications, and qualifications of qualifications, until, regaining his poise and self-assurance, he strides on to the end of the chapter, his discourse rising into a prose hymn in honor of all things as they are.

Chapter 3, "Presumable Properties of Substance," concludes with an additional list of such properties, numbered 6 through 10, which completes the series begun in the previous chapter. What is the basis, or rationale, for this symmetrical listing, and why are the properties ticketed for separate treatment?

The answer is this arrangement reflects the distinction between the most undeniable properties of substance, the given qualities, or at least the most fundamental ones and, on the other hand, those properties that make greater demands on trust, on animal

faith. The latter seem to be connected with physics; all laws of nature are assumptions that we make on faiththe faith that nature will continue to repeat itself it these particular ways. Matter need not *necessarily* exhibit those essences discerned by mathematics and the physical sciences; matter is too fertile, too powerful, too various to be so limited; in our particular universe, it just happens to display these habits. As he says at the start of chapter 3, "substance is always more and other than the essence which it exemplifies at any point" (*Realm of Matter* 26). So the potential of matter always exceeds the forms that it takes, the eternal essences that it happens to display.

It is tempting to try to make use of Santayana's phrase, "the essence of substance," which he introduces and entertains himself with. After all, the "indispensable qualities" of chapter 2 sound very much like essences, and to distinguish such would tend toward the delineation of the "essence of substance," if such were possible. But the "essence of substance" (which Santayana calls "perfectly useless" as a concept) includes all exemplified essences in our universenot only those that strike us as inevitable concomitants of our immediate en-

counters with substance, but also those whose exemplification we take more on faith. The totality, which we can never know, would include all exemplified essences of any sort, and this would be "the essence of substance."

The two categories (indispensable and presumable) are inclusive rather than exclusive and are intended mainly to suggest ways in which we approach or intuit the essences and not some sort of duality. It is a question of how much one is willing to take on (animal) faith. Concrete examplesthe absence of which make Santayana's arguments harder to follow than they should behelp. When we accidentally bump into a door, we are likely to be convinced by the immediate shock and by the unvarying persistence with which the closed door resists a foolishly renewed assault that here is a material substance external to the thought that posits it. Our faith will be very strong on this point. If, on the other hand, we apply ourselves to the study of a more elaborate habit or manifestation of the realm of matter (something Santayana called a *trope*), such as the embryology of the opossum, our confidence in the recurrence of the process involves a good deal more faith. Such faith makes natural science possible, but it is still faith, the sort of faith that Einstein cleaved to in refusing to believe that God "played dice with the universe." Santayana was more open on this issue than Einstein was; his substance, which in this respect is like Spinoza's *Deus sive natura*, was free to play at quantum mechanics if it so pleased. I often think of Spinoza's dictum "He who truly loves God cannot expect that God should love him in return" when I read Santayana's various descriptions of matter, in which all power

inheres and which creates us and bears us along with it, with a perfect indifference to our individual identities.

Santayana's division into realms of the various kinds of being was never intended to encourage a dualistic cleavage, let alone a quadripartite one; it was a division for purposes of emphasis. "My realms are layers: more as in Plotinus" (qtd. in Cory 182). And so, in the structure of *The Realm of Matter*, we see here a similar segregation, or gradationnot dualismwith *indispensable* being closer to intuition and *presumable* involving greater (animal) faith.

Although Santayana found little to praise in the existentialism of Camus and Sartre that began to make itself felt during and after World War II, his initial comments on the relation of essence and substance in chapter 3 anticipate the experience of the narrator in Sartre's *La Nausée*:

> This is not to say that, besides the essences which it exemplifies at each point, and the manner in which it connects and exchanges them, substance need have any *other* essence of its own. Its residual being, or not-being, is antithetical to essence altogether, and irrational. We may enjoy it,

> we may enact it, but we cannot conceive it; not because our intellect by accident is inadequate, but because existence, which substance makes continuous, is intrinsically a surd, a flux, and a contradiction. (*Realm of Matter* 2627)

The difference, of course, is that Sartre's character perceives only the irrational and nauseating immediacy of the flux, failing to intuit the essences (since, for Sartre, existence preceded essence).

Santayana, as he often does, adapts Spinoza for his own purposes when he asserts that all essences revealed in human experience may be assigned to substance: "Every character, every relation, every event which occurs anywhere qualifies substance and is a property of it." What distinguishes Santayana from Spinoza, let us note once more, is that such exemplification does not exhaust the realm of essence, which is infinite (whereas Spinoza thought every essence was necessarily existent). The only ones available to us, however, are those that matter happens to have appropriated. This is not say that we intuit all that is available to us; that totality of exemplifications belongs to another realm (i.e., of *truth*): "the universe is the sum of all substance, the form of which is called the truth" (*Realm of Matter* 27).

The rest of "Presumable Properties" is an elaboration and summation of these main points:

> [A]ll the essences appearing in contemplation belong to the essence of substance, as all the subtlest developments of music or dialectic belong to the essence of man.
>
> . . . The study of substance is the pursuit of these deepest and most pervasive of its properties, and of the manner in which the rarer

> properties and the supervening unities are generated in that context. It is the study of physics.
>
> . . . The universe itself no doubt is groundless and a perpetual miracle; but it is a tame wonder, and terribly self-imitative; and everything in it bears its hallmark and stamp of origin, if we are only clever enough to turn it inside out and inspect its fabric. The habits of nature are marvelous, but they are habits; and the flux of substance fills quite innocently and automatically the intervals which its own lapse may create. (*Realm of Matter* 2832)

In the course of this chapter, Santayana's discourse assumes an urgency and eloquence that makes us aware that it is something more than the working out of a philosophical argument; it is his own way of realizing what he felt to be his missed vocation as a poet of the first rank. It may be, as a friend said to me,

that "we are all failed epic poets" and that to detect such a note, pathetically evident elsewhere in Santayana's writings, is to attribute to him a commonplace and slightly ridiculous sorrow. Having succeeded in being no more than an imitator of minor late-Victorian modes, and having subsequently abandoned poetry altogether, it may be that he still aspired to be a great philosophical poet in prose. Clearly, much as he approaches a Dantesque ineffability in the chapter on pure being in *The Realm of Essence*, he is reaching after a Lucretian majesty and pathos, a true sublimity, in certain passages of *The Realm of Matter*:

> Sleep and night are not nothing: in them substance most certainly endures, and even gathers strength, or unfolds its hidden coils. Then the spirit, in withdrawing into slumber, seems to return into the womb, into a security and naturalness much deeper than its distracted life. It knows that while it sleeps all things wait, last, and ripen; they all breathe inwardly with that same peace which returns to it only in the night. Those heavenly bodies, which when gaped at seemed but twinkling specks, are in reality sleeping giants; they roll with an enormous momentum at prodigious distances and keep the world in equilibrium. The rocks are rooted in their buried foundations, the bed of the sea stretches beneath and holds it; the earth broods over its ominous substance, like a fiery orange with a rind of stone. It is this universal pause and readiness in things, guarding us unwatched, that chiefly supports our sanity and courage. (35)

The list of "presumable qualities" that concludes this chapter is more a reflection of Santayana's thought than of his experienceor it would be better to say, a reflection more of the matured philosophical experience than the earlier personal experience.

Again, excerpting the phrases chosen by Santayana for emphasis, we find:

> *Substance . . . sometimes takes the form of animals in whom there are feelings, images, and thoughts. These mental facts are immaterial.*
>
> *mental facts are manifestations of substance. . . .*
>
> *the phases or modes through which substance flows are continuous.*
>
> *the quantity of substance remains equivalent throughout.*
>
> *Each phase or mode of substance, although not contained in its antecedents, is predetermined by them in its place and quality, and proportionate to them in extent and intensity.* (4142)

As reviewers at the time noted, the entire chapter, and the book as a whole, would have benefited from specific references to the physics and the physicists of the century in which it was written. The treatment of physical science is an excessively literary one. One recalls Bertrand Russell's final dismissal of San-

tayana as a (mere) man of letters and his specific objections to the absence of discussion of science per se in *Reason in Science*. And yet one of Santayana's greatest strengths is the depth of his self-knowledge. This prevented him from posing as anything other than what he wasin this case, a Lucretian naturalist, not an Einsteinian or even a Newtonian.

Chapter 4, "Pictorial Space and Sentimental Time," resumes the balancing act of chapter 2. His purpose is to consider and validate the legitimate perspective of an attentive animal (or, to dignify the phrase with a more conventional term, an observer). His problem is to hold the line against idealistic philosophers, in one direction, and on the other side, against those who believe that mathematics and physics can offer an exhaustive account of matter.

With his usual fair-mindedness, in the effort to give the modern transcendentalists their due, he admits that "religion and romanticism have established the troubled realm of subjectivity, and have endowed immediate experience with a kind of authority which the maritime Greeks, keen-eyed but practical and argumentative, had never dreamt of" (*Realm of Matter* 44). By "pictorial space," he means the true apprehension of our literary psychology by which we grasp our location with respect to other thingsthe absolute relativity of our own center of consciousness. "Pictorial space," he asserts, "is one of the dearest possessions of the human spirit: it would be thankless of us to be impatient because it is subjective, as if it ought not to have been so" (59). The indented marginal summaries in the chapter are unusually helpful in picking out the themes, the presence of which is

sometimes hard to distinguish amid the grandeur of Santayana's organ blast; one of these reads: "Pictorial space always has a transcendental centre in some animal spirit" (51). It will not do to oversimplify too crudely, but it appears that he is insisting that for each center of consciousness there is a legitimate time and spacea subjective time and spacethat is relevant to that particular center, just as by *morality* he means those goods or evils, preferences or distastes, that are absolutely relative to the particular creature.

It is common to find Santayana shaking his chalk stick at transcendentalists, especially the ill-behaved Germans. Here, however, we see his concern with the error that identifies the consistency and predictability of mathematics with substance itself, thereby impoverishing our world. "Our cosmology has spirited away that living substance which, like Zeus, had many names, but under all of them was felt to be fatally revolving, plastic, and mighty" (*Realm of Matter* 44).

This complaintabout the effect of modern physicssounds remarkably like what John Crowe Ransom inveighed against in *God Without Thunder*; it also was the subject of Allen Tate's poem, "The Last Days of Alice." But Santayana was not really antiscientific; he had nothing whatever against patient and

humble investigationby the natural scientistsaimed at discovering just which essences substance, operating in our particular universe, had chosen to appropriate, which habits it had taken up. But he was unwilling to allow that these patterns were the eternal determinants of matter. One can appreciate that such an assertion ("our cosmology has spirited away the living substance") would be a hard saying for a mathematical physicist and that after reading it, he would walk no more with its author; but that is what Santayana says, arguing that no real power inheres in the so-called laws of nature, that they are merely habits that matter happens to have assumed, which it could change at any time and at any point.

> That the realm of matter, in its own way, is spatial and temporal follows from the conception of the realm as the field of action. . . . Physical space and time are integral elements in this realm of matter: they are *physical*, which is as much to say that they are contingent, to be explored by experiment rather than by reasoning, to be shared by us rather than contemplated. They may change their form if they choose, like any existence, and may manifest a different essence in their new instances. (*Realm of Matter* 4647)

The problem arises when we assume that the ideal relations that manifest themselves to intuition, the essences, are taken to be matter itself: "The clearness and necessity native to essence when kept in its own realm are thus attributed to the realm of matter, where all is profound fertility and darkness; and having discarded one or two optical illusions, and straightened out one or two perspectives in religious legend, we feel all the freer to endow the residue of our imaginative baggage with a perfect substantiality" (*Realm of Matter* 49).

This error is the other side of Descartes's coinor one might say, the obverse of his issue of fiat paper money. First, we have the presumption of the self-created consciousness, which leads to transcendentalism; and then we have the "clear and convincing" intuitions of mathematics, which are imposed uniformly on all substance. For Santayana, this represented a usurpation by human beings of the prerogatives of matter, an arrogation of the power of substance.

Chapter 5, "The Flux of Existence," contains numerous reformulations of Santayana's conception of matter and employs the vocabulary that eventually becomes predictable: *flux, irrational, rush of changes, pregnant and laboring, complex, elastic, fundamentally chaotic, primeval plastic substance, indestructible.* Much of what he has to say is a restatement of the relation of essence and substance, emphasizing that all power and all existence reside in matter and that "It is only by such embodiment in matter that essences can be loosened, as it were, from

their essential setting and turned into the characters of facts" (*Realm of Matter* 8384). Once more, his language may remind us of how importantly the sea figured in Santayana's conception of the realm of matter: "Nor is this universal flux composed of a single strand, like a thin autobiographical melody, sounding only one note at a time. It is many-voiced, like the sea of Homer" (95).

In the concluding chapters of *The Realm of Matter*, Santayana discusses at length two terms that he had been availing himself ofusing his own significationsfor years: *tropes* and *psyche*. No one familiar with Santayana's way of proceeding will expect him to provide abstract definitions or to make much use of concrete examples. But the flux of his discourse eventually begins to invest his terms with significance, and we begin to intuit their essences after they have presented themselves to us a sufficient number of times. One would not wish, however, to hear what Dr. Johnson might have said of a statement such as this: "The nature of existence is to possess whatsoever nature it possesses with a treacherous emphasis, dragging that essence, by a sort of rape, from its essential context into contingent relations; those relations, being contingent, are variable; and the flux is merely the realisation of this intrinsic variability involved in existence" (103). This sounds rather like a more elaborate version of the conclusion reached by the renowned savant in *Rasselas*, before whom the prince "bowed and was silent."

One gathers that what Santayana has in mind, in speaking of tropes, is some physically and temporally extended habit of matter ranging from the matrix of a crystal to the structure of the

human brain, from the orbit of an electron to the evolution of a spiral galaxy. Tropes enjoy impersonal existence: "[A] trope is not on the same plane of being as a perspective, because it is not relative to any point of view or native to any psyche: a perspective is only specious, whilst a trope is formal. . . . [T]he trope is a historical truth, the perspective is a historical impression" (*Realm of Matter* 1023).

Another way to put it might be to say that tropes are self-repeating patterns in nature, though he also admits that there is such a thing as an isolated and unique trope. Speaking of his own brand of materialism in the "Apologia Pro Mente Sua," he wrote: "The more minute, repeated, and constant the tropes discovered, the more materialistic or mechanical our dynamic monism will seem to grow. . . . The elements of mechanism must in any case be single tropes, contingent and repeatable" (510). In *The Realm of Truth*, he uses the phrase "self-repeating movement" in apposition with *trope*.

Elsewhere, the term carries the idea of a definite change: "But the simplest event, being a change, has a trope in it, a beginning and an end. . . . The only question touches the scale of the tropes to be found in nature; and whether the

more minute ones continue to run within the larger or whether (as an intuition) the larger transform and obliterate the smaller" (*Realm of Spirit* 72). One begins to cast about for synonyms or phrases that may capture what Santayana meant. "Sequential patterns in time" might do, or "interdependent events." Indeed, Santayana as much as offers something like this, "types of sequence" (*Realm of Matter* 104), though qualifications in the context weaken or obscure it as a definition. The problem may be that, for Santayana, the notion of *essence* did have something intrinsically static about it, especially since he did not want to permit the essences any plastic power over matter; and he finds himself trapped in something like Zeno's paradox, where an infinitude of subdivisions makes motion impossible. It may be best to say that trope is a metaphor of the succession of essences. He needs a metaphysical calculus to make the concept more exact.

Psyche is easier to grasp; one begins by equating it with *organism* and then proceeds to further distinctions. Santayana himself, in *The Realm of Matter*, uses a *via negativa* to get started:

> The psyche is not another name for consciousness or mind. Everything truly conscious or mentalfeeling, intuition, intentbelongs to the realm of spirit. We may say of spirit, but not of the psyche, that its essence is to think. The psyche is a natural fact, the fact that many organisms are alive, can nourish and reproduce themselves, and on occasion can feel and think. This is not merely a question of the use of words: it is *a deliberate refusal to admit the possibility of any mental machinery*. The machinery of growth, instinct, and action, like the machinery of speech, is all physical: but this sort of

> physical operation is called psychical because it falls within the trope of a life, and belongs to the self-defense and self-expression of a living organism. (13940)

The concluding sentence suggests an ad hominem interpretation: Santayana was known, from the time that he was a small child, as one who would defend himself, physically if need be, if he found himself actually threatened. His detestation of egotism, philosophical or otherwise, never obscured for him the need for rational and legitimate self-assertion; he did not go in for postrational self-denial and self-effacement. Even in old age, when it would have been physically quite risky to do so, he threatened to jump out of a moving automobile to preserve himself from the untimely and impertinent proselytizing of Jacques Maritain and his wife, who, he saw, were bent on "bringing him over" to Catholicism. In defending his body, he was defending his soul, and an attack on his soul seemed to him an attack on his body; in other words, the two were identical.

Santayana's insistence on the materiality of the psyche parallels his use of "animal faith"; part of his purpose is to reduce the claims of transcendental philosophy by forcing us to acknowledge our true source of being and our true nature. He refuses to place human nature in a special category apart from the rest of the universe and refuses to allow us to see the universe as a creature of our mental operations. Of psyche, he continues: "She is a *mode* or substance, a trope or habit established in matter; she is made of matter as a cathedral is of stone, or the worship in it of sounds and motions; but only their respective forms and moral functions render the one a cathedral or a rite, and the other a psyche" (*Realm of Matter* 140). He resists, however, anything like the Emersonian oversoul, any sort of pantheism that would consider the entire material universe as one vast psyche, arguing picturesquely that, in that case, a barking dog and a dead one would seem equally alive. "[T]he cosmos," he says, "can have no psyche, but only psyches within it; and the spirit is no psyche, but always has some psyche beneath which sustains it" (14243)

As he revolved these various terms in his mind, their mutual interdependencies became rather circular. This is not necessarily a flaw, in a philosopher whose approach never claimed for itself the (often deceptive) rigor of logical positivism; in fact, his is the ultimate method of any dictionary. In the first chapter of *The Realm of Spirit*, however, he did essay something like a set of definitions, and there we find under the heading "ORGANISM" this sentence: "Thus an organism is both a closed system of vital tropes and a nucleus in the general cosmic process." Under "PSYCHE," he asserts: "The self-maintaining and reproducing

pattern or structure of an organism, conceived as a power, is called a psyche" (15). So we could say that the psyche is the operation of matter that realizes the collection of tropes exhibited by a particular organismthe power behind the organism. Here he even permits himself to speak of the soul, but that is best left for a discussion that focuses on the whole realm of spirit.

To resume the discussion in terms of Santayana's life, the repeated shocks of his encounters with the great variety of the material works of nature, and of human beings as one extension of nature, made it habitual for him to see what we might call personality as firmly rooted in material circumstances. He therefore chose deliberately to deflate the idealistic puffiness that commonly distends the expression *psyche*. Wearied of the self-importance, however genial and generous, of his Protestant American neighbors, and of the complacent gentility of those who were Unitarians, he sought to shock them into a more acute awareness of their real origins in nature by speaking always in terms of what they would call our "lower" nature. The more ominous egotism of the German ideal-

ists had also oppressed him, especially as it had affected his philosophical education and academic career at Harvard. For all these reasons, he would insist:

> At the same time that which thinks in an animal is unmistakably the same substance as that which lives and moves in him: his mind shares the fortunes of his body and exists only by realising its contacts and its interests. . . . Mind-stuff is therefore simply an indirect name for matter, given in deference to an idealistic bias surviving the wreck of idealism. . . . There is no such thing as mental substance, mental force, mental machinery, or mental causation. . . . Thus psychology reports certain complications in the realm of matter: and the interpretations which may be added in terms of spirit depend entirely for their truth on the existence and spiritual fertility of the material background. (*Realm of Matter* 18889)

He was, from first to last, a lover of matter and had enjoyed the sensation of being a passenger in that great process, "carried along by a great automatic engine moving out of the past into the future, not giving me any reason for its being, nor any reason why I should be" ("Apologia" 505).

6
Detachment from Persons and Places and Things

There are three conditions which often look alike Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow: Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them, indifference.
T. S. Eliot, *"Little Gidding,"* 1942

My detachment from things and persons is also affectionate, and simply what the ancients called philosophy.
George Santayana, *"My Friendly Critics,"* 1922

One day, while George Santayana was still a Harvard undergraduate, he was accompanying his half sister Susana home from church and remarked to her that he was better fitted than she for the cloister. At the age of thirty-four, she was thinking of taking orders and subsequently completed some months of a novitiate. Susana told him, "You have *one* of the things required. You are *detached*." Such was the judgment of the person with whom he had the closest emotional ties of his entire life, of whom he said a half-century later:

> There is my sister, for instance, certainly the most important influence in my life, psychologically my mother, and one might almost say, my wife. Not that an incestuous idea ever entered my mind or hers; but Freud might have discovered things unsuspected by ourselves. She was once a novice in a Carmelite convent, and I much admired and liked her resolution to turn her back so completely on Boston, on her family, and on me. When later she married, I didn't like it, nor her husband. (qtd. in Cory 210)

To Susana, who knew him better than anyone else did, it was already evident that there was something that set George apartsomething even more noticeable than their mother's extraordinary self-possession. It was as if he had caught

from his mother that emotional deadening that he attributed mainly to the loss of her first child but also to her having adopted a typical Spanish fatalism, a refusal to be moved by anything whatever. Santayana treats her with as much sympathy and understanding as he can in his autobiography, but in an offhand moment he confided to Daniel Cory, "She didn't give a damn about us." He learned from her how *not* to care, or at least how not to contract any sort of intimate emotional commitments. Despite the remarkable range, variety, and liveliness of his friendships, there was always a disengagement, even a disingenuousness, that made some people feel that he was not being candid, not sincere. In a country and culture that valued commitment, even enthusiasm (in the bad old sense), he was decidedly out of placeeven though he joined in the Hasty Pudding productions and other club activities at Harvard. As his undergraduate years receded and gave way to advanced work in philosophy, he came to realize that solitary contemplation suited him best.

At the moment that he began to teach at Harvard, he tells us, he also began to plan for and look forward to retirement"separation from service" as we now often call it; and it is clear that Santayana, as a young man, savored the anticipated emotional retirement of old age. In *The Sense of Beauty*, we find the following:

> Old men full of hurry and passion appear as fools. . . . We cannot venerate anyone in whom appreciation is not divorced from desire. And this elevation and detachment of the heart need not follow upon any great disappointment; it is finest and sweetest where it is the

> gradual fruit of many affections now merged and mellowed into a natural piety. (242)

What could have led him, so far and so early, in this direction?

To understand Santayana as he was in his twenties and thirties, and as he continued until his eighties, one need only read his three-volume autobiography, completed during his war-enforced isolation in Rome. He turned to distant memories, as he explained to Daniel Cory, to take his mind off current eventsto set himself at yet one more remove from the world. What we learn immediately as we begin his memoirs is that there was a pattern of stoical reserve, of skepticism in matters of religion, and of geographical and cultural deracination in the lives of his parents and even of his grandparents: "[M]y grandfather . . . became a Deist, an ardent disciple of Rousseau, and I suspect a Freemason" (*Persons and Places* 4). He settled first in Glasgow and then in "Jeffersonian Virginia"both culturally remote from his origins.

A certain reserve, a failure to participate in normal patterns of human intimacy, also seems to have been a family traitwhether by temperament, or ac-

cident, or both. Santayana, for instance, makes a good deal of the fact that his mother never had a *novio*"a free and indefinite courtship, permitting no liberties, and involving no blame," something close to "going steady" in the United States, at least as it used to be in small-town America. He says that "this normal development seems not to have occurred in my mother's case. . . . In her the first flower of youth did not bring its natural fruit; it was cut short by the pruning hook" (*Persons and Places* 31). The circumstances of her marriages reflected conflicts of loyalties, cultures, and commitments; when she and George Sturgis, a Bostonian, decided to be married, they were both living in Manila, where any wedding meant a Catholic one. But this was impossible because of the Sturgises' Unitarian background. "There happened at that time, April, 1849, to be a British man-of-war at anchor in Manila Bay. The deck of that ship was British territory, and of course there was a chaplain, who being a jolly tar, would not object to marrying a Unitarian to a Papist" (43). And all this had occurred, or made itself evident in her character, before the extreme trauma of the death of her first child and then of her first husband. After Sturgis died, she acted with great fortitude and self-sufficiency, returning with four children to Boston but stopping to visit in London. Santayana admits that she deserved any amount of admiration but argues that actually "the most tragic events could not move her deeply. . . . She had undergone a veritable conversion, a sweeping surrender of all earthly demands or attachments." This sounds exactly like the transition that Santayana made himself and came to refer to as his *metanoia*; and indeed, he goes on: "I am confident of this because at about the same age I underwent a

similar transformation, less obviously, because in my case there were no outer events to occasion it, except the sheer passage of time, the end of youth and friendship" (5152).

In fact there were plenty of "outer events." In explaining Santayana's awareness of the omnipotence of matter or substance, I will speak of his years in Avila after his mother decided to transplant herself and the Sturgis children to Boston once more and the emotionally harsh circumstances of that period. And then there was his own removal to Boston, of which he says early in *Persons and Places*

> there was a terrible moral disinheritance involved, an emotional and intellectual chill, a pettiness and practicality of outlook and ambition, which I should not have encountered amid the complex passions and intrigues of a Spanish environment. From the point of view of learning, my education at the Boston Latin School and at Harvard College was not solid or thorough[!]; it would not have been solid or thorough in Spain; yet what scraps of learning or ideas I might have gathered there would have been

> vital, the wind of politics and of poetry would have swelled them, and allied them with notions of honor. (9)

Between his parents, following his mother's second marriage and his birth, "relations were always friendly and theoretically cordial, but never close" (49). Among the many oddities of their relationship was his father's willingness to have his son named after the first husbandat the insistence of Susana, who could remember her father. Everyone seemed to have a claim on little Jorge but not an intimate claim.

Both George and Susana felt that there was a "chasm" between them and their Boston friends; for Susana, who took her religion seriously, it had to do with being a Catholic, so that she felt separated from her relatives as well. There was also the fact that the whole family was not quite rich enough to move in the circles of those whom they equaled in other respects. At home, after they moved into 302 Beacon Street, "The family was deeply disunited, and each member unhappy for a different reason. One of the boys at school, Davis, who had once come to lunch, said afterwards that we seemed to live as if in a boarding house." They were unable to preserve a shared spiritual inheritance of any sort: "[L]ife in America gradually dispersed our interests and our affections" (140).

At the Boston Latin School, he felt intensely that he was solitary and unhappy, out of humor with everything that surrounded him, "attached only to a persistent dream-life, fed on books of fiction, on architecture and on religion." He believed that this stayed with him long afterwards, that "a certain backwardness, or unwilling acceptance of reality, characterizes my whole life and

philosophy, not indeed as a maxim but as a sentiment" (148). He did well and was, of all things (considering his later reputation for being dandified), named lieutenant colonel of something called the Boston School Regiment, an honor that involved election by his schoolmates; nevertheless, he says, "I remained there, as I remained at Harvard for twenty-five years, a stranger at heart." This "genteel poverty" and "education in a public day school, among children of humble parents," he said, "fortified me in the spirit of detachment and isolation." In part, he blames the whole ethos"America in those days made an exile and a foreigner of every native who had a temperament at all like mine" (180)thinking of the mass exodus of artists and writers over the next few decades. But Santayana occupied a veritable nest of interwoven alienations in addition to sharing the revulsion at American manners and values felt by many of his native-born contemporaries.

He admitted thatalthough he did not fit into Boston societyhe was fortunate to have ended up at Harvard: "No place, no rooms, no mode of living could have been more suitable for a poor student and a free student, such as I was and wished to be." In later years he would refer to himself as a wandering scholar in the medieval style. The very absence of close ties became congenial to him.

It may be unkind to put it this way, but it appears that Santayana, having been born and reared amid discontinuities and dislocations, developed a positive genius for persisting in the pattern of interrupted intimacies. A companion in his freshman yearone of three students, including Santayana, who were elected to the *Lampoon*identified only as "Sanborn" sat next to him in Natural History 4 where, he says, "we amused ourselves matching triolets." Only a few years later, poor Sanborn went into a decline, helped along by drinking.

> Yet this escape from reality was necessarily shortlived, and the awakening bitter and remorseful. The strain was too much for Sanborn. His discouragement became melancholia and began to breed hallucinations. He knew only too much about madness, as everyone did in old New England, and he feared it. He cut his throat in his bath with a razor, and we buried him in Concord, in sight of Emerson's grave, after a parlor funeral, with the corpse visible, at which his father read a few not very pertinent passages from the Upanishads and the Psalms. (196)

The disruption of emotional ties took other forms. Harvard itself evolved too rapidly. Glancing ahead (in *Persons and Places*) to the time of his retirement, Santayana refers to the cellular division into "Houses" that occurred in the second decade of this century. He was invited to settle into one of the new unitsbut for

him it represented the destruction of Harvard Yard as a natural center for the university: "But it was too late. My heart might have been in the thing twenty years earlier, and then the transformation of Harvard into a university of colleges might have been more socially successful. But by 1912 the noncollegiate additions had become too numerous and too important for such a reorganization" (202). The American spirit of restless transformation (which today continues, in one form, as unending reformation of university curricula) had overtaken his oasis of relative tranquillity. Also, Santayana was discovering what many have found since, that it is very hard to make oneself at home at Harvard. Another whomany years laterfelt the same way was Douglas Bush, who completed his graduate work there and returned to settle, eventually as Gurney Professor of English Literature, for several decades, admired and be-

loved by generations of students and colleagues. Bush remarks casually in one his informal essays that in spite his and his wife's long residence, and in spite of having acquired a plot in the Mount Auburn cemetery, which I suppose he now occupies, he never felt that he really belonged there.

In the chapter "First Return to Spain" in *Persons and Places*, Santayana narrates yet one more failure of intimacy. On board ship, during the crossing to Europe, he was taken in tow by a lady whom he refers to as a "Mrs. X" of Cincinnati. He was nineteen, and she must have been in her early thirties. She was traveling with a young son and a niece. When they parted company at Antwerp, there were plans for a meeting in Paris at the end of the summer. After two months spent with various relativesthe account of his visits is absorbing and amusing, including his being the object of a plotted marriageSantayana came down with smallpox. The disease was perfectly timed to disrupt the planned rendezvous with Mrs. X, and a follow-up plan for Lyons also failed. It is not perfectly clear why; Santayana only talks about the operas he attended there, alone. Without comment, he quotes from a letter from his father, who had opened one from Mrs. X that had been sent to Avila. His father teased him about having "missed your Conquest who as appears from the letter that I enclose and that I opened to see if it shed any light on your whereabouts, has been playing with you at hide and seek. My cousin Nicholas had already maliciously guessed as much, for being a priest he has a keen scent for everything that concerns women. He used to tell me that you would never find the lady, and attributed the fact to smallpox" (22223). I cannot speak for Santayana, but I know that such an

outcome would have so mortified meto have had stirrings of romantic adventure, at the age of nineteen, turned into a soap opera for the malicious delectation of my relativesthat I might very well have turned scornfully on the "cult of Venus," as Santayana later called Daniel Cory's proclivity for the ladies.

At the beginning of the next year, when he was a sophomore back at Harvard, he met Ward Thoron who was "destined to be my closest friend while we were undergraduates" (231). But after a visit to Thoron's home in Washington several years later (a visit where, displaying his extraordinary talent for meeting celebrated people, he conversed with Henry Adams), Santayana never saw Thoron again. "But this material separation was not indifferent; it symbolized a separation in our interests and aims." He goes on to explain that Thoron pursued his social and material opportunities and made himself into something that Santayana could not admire or appreciate, "so that perhaps nothing was lost to him or to me by our separation" (234). Santayana felt that had they seen

more of one another later, it would only have spoiled the pleasure of his earlier memories. Yet here we have another instance of separation, detachment, the end of affections, the impossibility of intimacy.

In recalling his experience in Germany, where he and C. A. Strong both went from Harvard, having prudently applied to split a Harvard traveling fellowship rather than compete against one another, Santayana makes several statements that may astonish a reader of his later work, *Egotism in German Philosophy*. Neither he nor Strong had liked Berlin, and he had actually left and settled at Oxford. In *The Middle Span*, he laments that no one told him to attend a German university in a smaller city: "Were there no inspired philosophers then in Germany? Was there no enthusiastic romanticism and no *Gemutlichkeit*? For me it was a source of eternal regret to have missed the enrichment and the lesson that fusion with German life, in my youth, might have given me" (89). Since so much of his philosophy is a spirited rejection of the German transcendentalists, and since he inveighed so frequently against the "barbarism" of the northern European spirit (including that of Browning, Shakespeare, and, if he had dared, Goethe), his lament at never having been carried away on a tide of Teutonic sentimentality, not to say beer, is very odd. But it begins to make sense when one considers the complete absence in his life of such warmth of feelingthe warmth that is supplied to Oliver Alden by the German Fräulein Irma in *The Last Puritan*, for example. And although one of the chief ways in which those who dislike Santayana express their distaste is to call him a snob, we find him recurrently expressing his affection for those other

national typesIrish nursemaids are onewhose emotional generosity endeared them to him.

The country for which Santayana cherished the most affection and in which he felt quite at home (even more, at times, than in Italy) was England. Not only the refinement that wealth, aristocracy, and the class structure (including, of course, Oxbridge connections) made possible but also the cheer and heartiness that he encountered lower on the social scale endeared the people to him. One encounters abundant evidence of these feelings in *The Last Puritan*. Looking back from the long perspective of *Persons and Places*, Santayana spoke of "that brave, free, sporting side of the youthful Anglo-Saxon character which I was to love so much" (131). He loved the language as well, remarking in a footnote in *The Sense of Beauty*, "English is remarkable for the intensity and variety of the colour of its words. No language, I believe, has so many words specifically poetic" (168). The British reverence for privacy appealed to him as much as American invasiveness annoyed him; one might even say that much of Santayana's philosophical outlook involves minding one's own business and

leaving others to mind theirs. His parents, in their turn, had admired the English. He considered making England his permanent home.

Yet in the end, this affiliation proved to be only the occasion for another series of disappointed attachments, failed intimacies, and disrupted friendships. Perhaps Santayana did not realize how common such disappointments can be even to a person born, raised, and domiciled for life in a single town, the sort of tragedy that is the substance of much of Edwin Arlington Robinson's best poetry. At any rate, he could take it hard when he learned that he could no longer put up at the house where he had taken lodgings in London for twenty-five years:

> [W]hen I rang the bell, though the man was the same familiar valet, he seemed much more spruce, and even a bit embarrassed in his conspicuously clean linen. The same lady, he explained, still lived here, but the house was no longer a hotel. And he politely presented me, on a silver tray, the letters that had arrived for me. There was nothing to do but to look foolish and say, "Oh, indeedI seethank you," and get again into my taxi. (*Middle Span* 21)

He says that he never again felt at home in London lodgings, and that this incident, though a trivial circumstance, marked the end of his pleasant days in England:

> The moment when I lost my pleasure in London was the very moment when I was at last free and might have settled down there, as would be natural for an unattached man who writes in the English language. Moreover, unlike most foreigners, I was perfectly happy in the English climate and the English way of living. They were a relief from America in softness and dignity, and from the Continent in comfort and privacy. Yet a somewhat mysterious contrary force

> prevented me from making the attempt. Perhaps it was my age. I was fifty, and the prospect backward had begun decidedly to gain on the prospect forward. (35)

It is important to realize that the chronology of Santayana's successive detachments from people, places, religion, nationality, profession, and social station is simultaneously a record of the warmth of his emotional commitments. The pages that he devotesnot only in his autobiography and novel, but scattered throughout his writingsto the affectionate delineation of character shows a soul whose generosity and appreciation of the finer shades of personality make one think of Dickens and Proust, two of his favorite writers, as it happens. The portraits of Lionel Johnson and Frank Russell may be the most

comprehensive that exist of those two persons. He did not restrict his reminiscing and invention to occupants of the higher ranges of British class and culture. There are numerous others; so many, in fact, that Santayana (often accused of snobbishness and certainly well-equipped, though not inclined, to outdo most name-droppers) was faulted by some readers of his autobiography for wasting time on unimportant people. His reply was they were important to *him*. It would therefore be a great mistake to join the troop of those who think Santayana a cold fish, a snob, an aloof and fastidious academic, a person who pretended to feelings but who actually had none.

But those feelings were so often violated by events that one can see how successive estrangements became a virtual habit for him. When we read something like this, we, too, learn to prepare ourselves for the blow:

> It was at the club ["The Gas House," at Harvard] that I formed the most unclouded and heartfelt of my American friendships, that with Bob and Warwick Potter. . . . Warwick, who was in the class of 1893 and died at the end of that year, was for two previous winters my constant companion, and also pupil; and it was at the club, during our poetry-readings in my room, and on our walks that I insensibly came to think of him as a younger brother and as part of myself. (*Middle Span* 1089)

This sounds much like the attachment professed by Milton in "Lycidas," and nearly as strong as that which actually inspired *In Memoriam*. And it was not the only thing. Warwick's sudden death (from cholera)

> seemed a new kind of blow, not violent, not loud, but strangely

> transforming. A gradual change due to many converging causes was going on within me. A twelvemonth before, my sister Susana had been married; that summer, my father had died; and the death of Warwick now came to accentuate the effect of these mutations and to make me aware of their meaning for my spiritual life. I shall return later to this my *metanoia*. (109)

Santayana's position at Harvard over the next few years gradually became an awkward one. He continued to cultivate the acquaintance of undergraduates and to participate in their skits and parties; many years later he looked back at this time and remarked sadly to Daniel Cory that he supposed that he was then what had come to be called homosexual and that "Since Freud we know so much more about these things" (Cory 41). His role at Harvard, whatever it was, had been antithetical to that of William James, and Santayana had begun to feeland really never ceased to feelthat there was some intangible criterion that made him not really welcome on the faculty, though officially he continued

to be retained and promoted. In 189697, therefore, Santayana spent an unpaid leave improving his grasp of Greek philosophy (at Cambridge), and when he came back, he made a break with his past: "My relations with undergraduates and with Boston society, although renewed, were renewed on a new basis. I no longer played the familiar companion or the young man about town" (*Middle Span* 158). His progress through the ranks at Harvard was thenceforth so routine that he accords it a single paragraph, though it occupied fourteen years. But the apparently smooth sailing masked an inner distancing that never ceased:

> When I resigned my professorship my name had figured in the Harvard Catalogue, in one capacity or another, for thirty years. Yet that long career had been slow and insecure, made in an atmosphere of mingled favor and distrust. My relations with President Eliot and with other influential persons had always been strained. I had disregarded or defied public opinion by not becoming a specialist, but writing pessimistic, old-fashioned verses, continuing to range superficially over literature and philosophy, being indiscernibly a Catholic or an atheist, attacking Robert Browning, prophet of the half-educated and half-believing, avoiding administrative duties, neglecting the intelligentsia, frequenting the society of undergraduates and fashionable ladies, and even appearing as a witness in the disreputable Russell trial. (159)

This last action only earned him Frank Russell's neglect, to the point that Russell forgot his name. Of his colleagues, he adds: "It was an anonymous concourse of coral insects, each secreting one cell, and leaving that fossil legacy to enlarge the earth" (162). And about his happiness at leaving, he writes: "But all was now a voluntary study, a satirical survey, a free reconsideration: the point of view had become frankly personal and speculatively

transcendental. A spirit, the spirit of a stray individual, was settling its accounts with the universe. My official career had happily come to an end" (181).

In *My Host the World*, Santayana offered an analysis of one of the processes by which, it seemed to him, the personal distancing occurred that he felt so keenly about. We do not improve with years, he argued, but remain the same; we do, however, exhibit other sides of our character, and if those sides are unpleasant, people may come to think that we have changed for the worse. When we see this in friends, "we are no longer charmed by their virtues or interested in their vices." At just this pointwhere he is discussing the relations between himself and his half-cousin Howard Sturgis, whom he was helping out then by settling in his household as a paying guest (in London), Santayana offers a reve-

latory and none too flattering self-appraisal: "Certainly, I am profoundly selfish in the sense that I resist human contagion, except provisionally, on the surface, and in matters indifferent to me. For pleasure and conviviality, I like to share the life about me, and have often done it; but never so as, at heart, to surrender my independence" (103). This confession, if maliciously interpreted, sets Santayana in a rather bad light. We may find it possible, however, to treat him with greater charity than he lavishes on himself and to see the whole business of his unsatisfactory temporary residence with Howard Sturgis as just another of the inevitable ruptures that defined his life. At any rate, it ends on that note: "I had already, gradually and insensibly lost Howard when he began to shed his rare self, with its inimitable honest mixture of effeminacy and courage, sensibility and wit, mockery and devoted love" (106).

Santayana had over the years taken up temporary residence in a half-dozen countries; after the break with Harvard, though he still could claim no definite national affiliation, it became necessary to settle into a more or less permanent base of operations. He knew what he was aiming at in life: "But essentially I desired solitude and independence: not in the English form of quiet home life in the country, but rather after the fashion of ancient philosophers, often in exile, but always in sight of the market-place and the theatre" (*My Host the World* 119). This he found in Rome.

One common thread that runs throughout his writings is the special favor he extends toward countries surrounding the Mediterranean and to their peoples. This favoritism had, at times,

an unfortunate effect: he joined those who felt that Italian fascism, despite what he recognized as the obvious crudity and stupidity of Mussolini, represented a natural expression of the spirit of that country, and it is rare to find him facing squarely the ugliness of the Catholic Inquisition. Evidently he felt himself to be an heir to the philosophy and culture surrounding the Mediterranean and chose to ally himself to this diffuse heritage, feeling that the spirit of the region hovered along the borders of that central sea, which generated that spirit, much as matter itself gave rise to spirit in his own system of thought. This does not, of course, excuse his error in failing to perceive adequately the ugliness and danger of fascism.

A few more separations prepared the way for his final retirement. His mother's death and Susana's decision to marry and to live in Spain removed any remaining personal connection with Boston; he had never felt close to his colleagues at Harvard or to his step-family, the Sturgises. Divisions of allegiance in Spain had begun to make themselves felt, anticipating the civil war. In addition, he had distanced himself so completely from that milieu that he could no longer feel at home: "When I returned to Avila after the war [World War I] I felt

a distinct change in the moral climate. My long residence in England and the fact that my sympathies during the struggle had been strong on the English side, produced a chill towards me in my sister's family" (*My Host the World* 121). Santayana now personified, for his Spanish relatives and acquaintances, the anti-Catholic English policies of the previous three centuries and something of the French meddling in Spain as well. They did not recognize, as he says, the far more serious threat of a state-supported Nietzschean neobarbarism in Germany. It is not hard to imagine that some Spanish readers of *Egotism in German Philosophy* might only have seen in it the acquired jingoism of an Anglophile.

In any event, Avila was out as a place to settle down. For various reasons, so were Paris, the Riviera, Florence, Venice, Cortina, and other spots. The pages that Santayana devotes to his considerations of just where to settle are somewhat more interesting than a catalog of the strengths and demerits of various summer resorts, but one can see how annoying they would be to read if one felt any antipathy toward him on any other account. At the start of this chapter, "Old Age in Italy," he writes:

> When at the threshold of old age I found myself free and looked about for a place of retirement and finally found it in Italy and particularly in Rome. I was not at all in search of an ideal society or even of a congenial one. I was looking only for suitable lodgings, where the climate, the scene, and the human ways of the neighbors might not impede but if possible inspire me in my projected work and where I might bring my life to a peaceful end. (*My Host the World* 119)

World War II, however, broke in upon him. After an attempt to

resettle in Switzerland failedpartly because he still held a Spanish passport and partly because of his own spirited refusal to engage in the minor deceptions that could have got him across the borderhe rode it out. His writings during this period do not chronicle what must have been discomforts and deprivations, as well as the possibility of being caught in the cross fire. Instead, he set himself to completing the third volume of his autobiography. As a consequence, there is not much of a record of what life was actually like for him between 1941 and 1945. The photographs of him after the liberation of Rome and the descriptions of his "ballooning" clothing show us someone whom the good offices of the Blue Nuns had prevented from starving but who had nevertheless undergone an involuntary dietary regimen. As John McCormick tells us in the chapter "Wartime Italy" in his biography, the nursing home where Santayana lived was far enough away from any important rail lines of factories to escape intentional bombing

after the Allied invasion, but the explosions were loud enough to hurt his ears (41935).

One consequence of the war was to effect even more completely Santayana's ultimate detachment from the worlda detachment that had been in process for nearly eighty years. "The contemporary world has turned its back on the attempt and even on the desire to live reasonably. The two great wars (so far) of the twentieth century were adventures in enthusiastic unreason. . . . Now the contemporary world has plenty of knowledge of nature for its purposes, but its purposes show a positively insane abandonment of its true interests" (*My Host the World* 139).

It would be a mistake to see World War II as decisive in fixing Santayana's views; it was, however, a confirmation of something he had seen fifty years before, when he wrote, in *The Sense of Beauty*, "So, too, the spectacle of the erring world must sadden the philosopher, even in the Acropolis of his wisdom; he would, if it might be, descend from his meditation and teach. But those movements of sympathy are quickly inhibited by despair of success; impossibility of action is a great condition of the sublime" (236).

The quotation may serve as a transition into a survey of the idea of detachment in all his work. But the use of the word *sublime* requires commentary; the connection of the word with the concept of detachment is tenuous, and the precise meaning of *sublime* to Santayana is important. The word appears frequently in *The Sense of Beauty*; it does not signify anything like Edmund Burke's aesthetic category, or the (still Burkean) concept of awe-stuck exhilaration evoked programmatically in Tennyson's

juvenile poem, "Sublimity." As with many such terms, Santayana gives it his own twist; he intended something more like what the word means when used to translate Longinus, while preserving the association that it hadfor romantic painters and writerswith scenes or objects of terror. In Santayana's book, "The suggestion of terror makes us withdraw into ourselves: there with the supervening consciousness of safety or indifference comes a rebound, and we have the emotion of *detachment* [my emphasis] and liberation in which sublimity really consists" (239). This curious blend of skepticism with romantic aesthetics continues:

> But although the experience of evil is the commonest approach to this attitude of mind, and we commonly become philosophers only after despairing of instinctive happiness, yet there is nothing impossible in the attainment of detachment by other channels. The immense is sublime as well as the terrible. . . . Infinity, like hostility, removes us from things and makes us conscious of our independence. . . . If we may call liberation of the self by the consciousness of evil in the world, the Stoic sublime, we

> may assert that there is also an Epicurean sublime, which consists in liberation by equipoise. Any wide survey is sublime in that fashion. Each detail may be beautiful. (241)

One gathers from the passage that the Burkean terminology had been bandied about at Harvard and that Santayana's use of it had in part the effect of making his readers feel on more familiar ground, unaware of the uncompromising materialism implied by what he actually said. The relevant point is the phrase "the attainment of detachment" in connection with the discussion of the sublime. This distinguishes his concept from romantic sublimity, which involved gathering the onlooker, emotionally, into the scene or situation.

This concept of detachment served Santayana excellently in the analysis of consciousness that he undertook in *Reason in Common Sense*, in which he was beginning to react against the Jamesian view that the interpenetration of mind and matter, the flux of experience, is not only the norm but the desirable condition. "The predetermined instincts we have as animals fortunately focus our attention on practical things, pulling it back, like a ball with an elastic cord, within the radius of pertinent matters. Instinct alone compels us to neglect and seldom to recall the irrelevant infinity of ideas." Buried in these sentences is the idea that contemplation of the "infinity of ideas" is impossible in the midst of the distraction of animal concerns. What is needed is that we separate ourselves from the experiential flux: "The great difficulty in education is to get experience out of ideas." Otherwise, we revert to "idiocy and lunacy" (51).

In the next volume of *The Life of Reason, Reason in Society*, we find Santayana taking something comparable to the role of the celibate priest advising his worldly parishioners how best to order their lives. The entire book has to do with those compromises, or harmonizing, of the irrational purposes with which the creative flux of the realm of matter has endowed us allthe social arrangements and adjustments that make fruitful existence possible. He begins with "Love"with relations between two individualsand expands his field progressively throughout the book, taking in family, government (including surveys of the various forms of government somewhat in the manner of Aristotle), attachment to country, and possible ideal goals for social arrangements. One cannot help noticing that the philosophical life or, indeed, the academic life, seem scarcely to figure in the discussion; the reason is that Santayana's philosophy is preeminently one of the isolated consciousness, whose attachment is to eternal things, to the ideal essences, the immutable qualities, the given of immediate awareness, the possibilities of being apart from actual existence. *Reason in Society*, however, is a survey of those things that concern most people most

of the time. Santayana, because of his unique perspective, is engaged in cataloguing those things from which he found himself separated, from which he kept his distance, and from which, he assumed, any contemplative should remove himself. Detachment is the unstated ideal, and the philosophical life (and in a less perfect way, the academic life) fostered this condition.

In *Reason in Society* there appears a marginal heading of peculiar poignancy: "The heart alienated from the world." In that paragraph, one finds the words: "[I]n many a youth little suspected of mysticism it produces estrangement from the conventional moralising world, which he instinctively regards as artificial and alien. It prepares him for excursions into a private fairy-land in which unthought-of joys will blossom amid friendlier magic forces" (18). Surely this is a preparation for Santayana's self-initiation into the realm of essence. Further evidence of this occurs later on: "Among ideals themselves infinite variety is consistent with perfect harmony" (98).

The extent to which he deliberately cultivated his own inherited and conditioned aloofness becomes evident in certain passages from *Reason in Religion*:

> Now, reflection is a vital function; memory and imagination have to the full the rhythm and force of life. But these faculties, in envisaging the past or the ideal, envisage the eternal, and the man in whose mind they predominate is to that extent detached in his affections from the world of flux, from himself, and from his personal destiny. This detachment will not make him infinitely long-lived, nor absolutely happy, but it may render him intelligent and just, and it may open to him all intellectual pleasures and all human sympathies. (262)

Much of what Santayana writes in *Reason in Art* owes its presence to his sense of being *dépaysé*. Artists, he felt, had to be rooted in some culture, tradition, language, civilization, and national identityif only to react against such identification. And yet in *Three Philosophical Poets*, he turns on himself, arguing that Dante would have done better to keep himself more detached from such things:

> Dante was far from perfect, even as a poet. He was too much a man of his own time, and often wrote with a passion not clarified into judgement. So much does the purely personal and dramatic interest dominate us as we read of a Boniface or an Ugolino that we forget that these historical figures are supposed to have been transmuted into the eternal, and to have become bits in the mosaic of Platonic essences. (128)

Scattered through *Winds of Doctrine* and *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* are reminders of Santayana's insistence that true wisdom requires a *contemptu mundi*; the very fact that the person who speaks for Santayana in *Dialogues in Limbo* is called "The Stranger" argues for his self-definition as an outsider. A few phrases from *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* will convey the sense of separation that intensified as he took leave forever of Harvard and America:

> Spiritual life is not a worship of "values," whether found in things or hypostasized into supernatural powers. It is the exact opposite; it is *disintoxication* from their influence. . . .
>
> [T]he homelessness of spirit comes from detachment, detachment no less from the grander thing which the snob respects and pretends to know as from this humbler thing which he despises. (248, 271)

By the time that he came to write *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, which served as a general introduction to *Realms of Being*, Santayana had achieved a degree of detachment that made it possible for him to experience the "solipsism of the present moment" and then to return from that to an acceptance of the given, the essences. His philosophy of essence is very much one of the isolated consciousness. This limits its range but sharpens its focus. James, Dewey, and the other pragmatists could do more with the middle ground than Santayana couldwith the world of human action, human connections, social activity. The scientific cosmologists could carry their investigations of the nonhuman to the frontiers of the inconceivably immense or microscopic. Santayana allowed for these but gave his closest attention to the immediacy of individual awarenessand by so

doing, affirmed the validity of the individual psyche and its point of view. His detachmentnot in a laboratory, but in the quiet of a hotel room or a studymade it possible for him to accomplish his work. That work was to elaborate the theory of essencesa theory that seems esoteric but which, he insisted, was merely an admission of what was undeniably given to our awareness. to see what was immediately at hand, however, required not immersion but detachment. In the preface to *Realms of Being*, he wrote, "Philosophers and nations cannot be happy unless separate. . . . My eclecticism is not helplessness before sundry influences; it is detachment and firmness in taking each thing simply for what it is" (*Realm of Essence* xviii).

Nearly two decades after the publication of *The Realm of Essence*, Santayana was still insisting on the necessity of slipping free of one's earthly trammels if one wished to lead the life of the spirit. Indeed, he endows his savior (in *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*) with this capacity for distancing himself, saying of

Christ, "This same detachment and disdain of earthly ties appear in other passages, and they are natural in any young man with a vocation, especially of a poetic or ascetic kind" (39). Speaking of the relationship of Christ to God the Father, he emphasizes division over unity, speaking of the former as "the exiled and commissioned Word sent into the darkness of a world that could not understand it. The sense of separation overlay the sense of union" (66). But we must not misread Santayana; later on his argument becomes that this detachment served the ultimate purpose of reconciliation: "Christ, after his mission was begun, had been markedly detached from his mother and brethren. But now, at his last hour, his heart reverts to its first attachment" (150).

Santayana, tooafter his ascent into the realm of pure beingalso reverted to his first attachments.

7
In Search of Substance

"Matter has been kind to me, and I am a lover of matter. Not only aesthetically but dynamically, as felt by Lucretius, nature is to me a welcome presence" (*My Host the World* 136) wrote Santayana as he neared the conclusion of his three-volume autobiography and the end of his life as well.

This reconciliation with the physical universe was not always easily won. He had crossed the Atlantic dozens of times, always fighting seasickness and usually succumbing to itbut forgiving nature its roughness afterwards, accepting this as a condition of existence and seeing in the tumult of the ocean a living embodiment of his realm of matter. Of his first journeyat the age of eighthe recalled:

> I might gladly have become a sailor. I love moving water, I love ships, I love the sharp definition, the concentrated humanity, the sublime solitude of the sea. The dangers of it only make present to us the peril inherent in all existence, which the stupid, ignorant, land-worm never discovers; and the art of it, so mathematical, so exact, so rewarding to intelligence, appeals to courage and clears the mind of superstition, while filling it with humility and true religion. Our world is a cockleshell in the midst of overwhelming forces and everlasting realities; but those forces are calculable and those realities helpful, if we can manage to understand and obey them. (*Persons and Places* 130)

On other occasions he could refer to the consequences of his *mal de mer* as a "good spring cleaning," and usually he recovered

sufficiently to enjoy most of the voyage. But the sense of power inherent in the open sea colors many of his pronouncements about matter. One cannot help comparing him with Königs-berg-bound Immanuel Kant, who feared working himself into a sweat by a toorapid stroll; a trip to the rail of a passenger ship might have purged Kant, too, of philosophical idealism.

Santayana was also aware of the force that material circumstances had exerted in his parents' lives and of their brave, or at least phlegmatic, demeanor in confronting them. "The sea had no terrors for her," he said of his mother (*Persons and Places* 31). "The voyage from Cadiz to Manila, round the Cape of Good

Hope, lasted six months, included the inevitable worst storm the Captain had ever encountered, with death yawning before the passengers in every hollow between the black waves" (32). Not long after, she had found herself orphaned and alone on the island of Batang in the Philippines; she had accompanied her father who had gone there as a governor representing Spain. Her surviving and prospering in such unlikely circumstances is one of the more astonishing narratives in *Persons and Places*. He speaks of his father as "not brave," and yet (though they did not marry until many years later, in Spain, after the death of Santayana's mother's first husband), his father, too, went as governor to Batang. Some years later, he was on the same ship that brought Santayana's mother and her first family to Boston from Manila. Circumnavigation of the globe by way of Cape Horn in the ships of those days was something more daring than a Sunday picnic, and one wonders why Santayana did not credit his father with greater intrepidity. In any event, as he contemplated his parents' lives, Santayana could feel vividly the place that the sheer bulk of the material world occupies in human affairs. If one keeps constantly in mind the circumstances of Santayana's life, one cannot help but be aware of the omnipresence of the material universe as the acknowledged source and background for all his thought.

Few readers of *The Sense of Beauty* (1896) could have anticipated the depth of Santayana's commitment to matter as the ground and source of realized experience; that work, with the words *Aesthetic Theory* in its subtitle, probably suggested to many of his early readers that he was an American representative of Paterism. Both the style and the subject suggest that

impressionistic finesse, that shimmering elegance, that one finds in Walter Pater. The calm transition that carries *The Sense of Beauty* from a discussion of Zeus and Athena to one of Christ and the Virgin Mary may well have carried a faint odor, for American readers, of decadent, or at least daring, paganism. Two paragraphs later, he declares, "The Virgin Mary, whose legend is so meagre, but whose power over the Catholic imagination is so great, is an even clearer illustration of this inward building up of an ideal form. . . . It is a pity that a foolish iconoclasm should so long have deprived the Protestant mind of the contemplation of this ideal" (18990).

This is the sort of statement that one might expect to find in a document planted by a secret agent of the Oxford Movement whose purpose was to smuggle contraband popery into Protestant America. If *The Sense of Beauty* did continue to sell because, as Santayana said with wry self-satire late in life, it was required reading in academies for young ladies, it must have supplied them, or at least their teachers, with delicate frissons of anti-Catholic religious horror. We should recall that in fact Santayana was friends with Lionel Johnson, who in the poem, "To a Spanish Friend," urged him to return to the worship of the Blessed

Mother, saluting him as "Son of Holy Avila." Of a letter from Johnson to him, Santayana wrote: "This was written at the moment when the vogue of aestheticism, pessimism, preraphaelitism, and amateur Catholicism was at its height" (*Middle Span* 58).

Santayana must have been aware that such a flavor in his writings might actually serve him well at Harvard, just as a hint of Marxism might actually help assure tenure in many American universities in the 1970s. Harvard was collecting the Pre-Raphaelite paintings now housed in the Fogg Museum. What may have escaped notice by his readers was the robust naturalistic underpinning that gives even this early work a closer kinship with Spinoza and Lucretius than with Walter Pater. Not that Santayana was trying to conceal anything; early in the book he writes: "In appreciation, in preference, lies the root and essence of all excellence. Or, as Spinoza clearly expresses it, we desire nothing because it is good, but it is good only because we desire it" (*Sense of Beauty* 18). Those who encountered the word *appreciation* in this passage are not likely to have realized that, far from being founded on a vague Paterian openness to beautiful experience, its use here rested on the absolute relativism of an extreme materialism and naturalism. *Preference* did not necessarily mean just the preference of a refined aestheticism; it also meant the needs, desires, goods, and goals of any living creature, any organism.

Two paragraphs further on the naturalistic bias becomes more explicit: "Values spring from the immediate and inexplicable reaction of vital impulse, and from the irrational part of our

nature" (*Sense of Beauty* 19). This may sound like a confession of some kind of romantic faith (*vital impulse, irrational*)indeed, one could imagine its being attributed to Nietzsche, finding its place in some passage celebrating Dionysiac abandon or the confident dictating of morals by the triumphant transcendental ego. In fact, Santayana is insisting that values have a material basis and that the irrational flux of matter that has brought us into existence has also endowed us with preferences that are strictly relative to ourselves, through which we identify what is good (and beautiful). We are creatures of this material universe, "we are not ourselves independent of this world in which we live. We sprang from it, and our relations in it determine all our instincts and satisfactions" (268).

Beauty, he concludes, is not the consequence of a congruence of material objects with Platonic forms; it does not inhere in the object that we find beautiful. Nor, to go in the other direction, is it a quality imposed by the mind or found in the mind; there are no aesthetic categories. Instead, "The satisfaction of our reason, due to the harmony between our nature and our experience, is partially realized already. The sense of beauty is its realization. . . . Beauty is a

pledge of the possible conformity between the soul and nature, and consequently a ground of faith in the supremacy of the good" (*Sense of Beauty* 270).

This reference to the soul, in the concluding sentence of *The Sense of Beauty*, must have reassured many readers that Santayana had not seriously disarranged their values; they could hardly be aware that in his later writings *soul* would give way to *psyche* and take on a meaning closer to what we intend when we say *organism*. The inspiration and uplift of the sentencewhich one might attribute to Emerson if one were unaware of its contextconceals an uncompromising materialism; one could translate it, "Beauty is the anticipated accommodation of the environment to the organism, providing the satisfaction and reassurance of favorable conditions for its continued existence." If this seems a reductio ad absurdum of Santayana's views here, turn back to the earlier part of the book, where he speculated that "It would be curious and probably surprising to discover how much the pleasure of breathing has to do with our highest and most transcendental ideals" (56). Here we might be listening to an aside dropped from the lips of William James, as he mused on yet another curious possibility in the variousness of human experience. We might not realize how tenaciously, though unobtrusively, Santayana is holding to the primal authority of matternot spiritin the actualizing of that experience.

Reflecting (in *The Sense of Beauty*) on the importance of visual experience, he accepts a naturalistic explanation for the existence of a sense of sight: "[I]t obviously became very advantageous to every animal to develop an organ sensitive to these

vibrationssensitive, that is, to light" (73). Turning his attention to the works of human beings, whether utilitarian or artistic, he says "[W]e may note that however subordinate the beauty may be which a garment, a building, or a poem derives from its sensuous material, yet the presence of this sensuous material is indispensable" (77). And it is the material universe that makes all aesthetic experience possible: "The beauty of material is thus the groundwork of all higher beauty, both in the object, whose form and meaning have to be lodged in something sensible, and in the mind, where sensuous ideas, being the first to emerge, are the first that can arouse delight" (81).

Santayana's sense of matter as the only possible grounds for beauty never obscured his awareness that it is simultaneously the source of forces that blight, frustrate, and destroy; his awareness of the fundamental tragedy of existence was acute. Evil, though relative to the entity whose ends were thwarted, was absolute from the point of view of that entity; but it was the function of reason to harmonize as nearly as possible the conflicting impulses that arose from the bosom of the material universe. "Matter," he wrote in *Reason in Art*, "has a dou-

ble function in respect to existence; essentially it enables the spirit to be, yet chokes it incidentally. Men sadly misbegotten, or those who are thwarted at every step by the times' penury, may fall to thinking of matter only by its defect, ignoring the material grounds of their own aspirations" (169). As he penned these words he may have been thinking of the hard-bitten attitudes of the adults whom he lived among in Avila, where the arid and stony landscape seemed an image of conditions barely favorable to the realization of human nature and sometimes not quite sufficient.

When his mother departed for America, to educate her other children there according to the wishes of her first husband, Santayana found himself left, at the age of five, with his father.

> [A]fter they went my uncle Santiago, with his wife Maria Josefa and his daughter Antoñita, came to live with us, and a new and distinct chapter begins in my experience. The scene, the persons, the events are still present to me most vividly. I didn't feel deeply or understand what was going on, but somehow the force of it impressed my young mind and established there a sort of criterion or standard of reality. That crowded, strained, disunited, and tragic family life remains for me the type of what life really is: something confused, hideous, and useless. (*Persons and Places* 119)

He claims not to have been much damaged by this: "It caused me no suffering; I was a child carried along as in a baby-carriage through the crowd of strangers; I was neither much bothered nor seriously neglected." But he does attribute much of his outlook on life to the sensory and emotional deprivation of these years, though he does not use those terms and though he is the least self-pitying of autobiographers: "[M]y eyes and ears became

accustomed to the unvarnished truth of the world, neither selected for my instruction nor hidden from me for my benefit."

A child psychologist of the 1990s might be most horrified by what Santayana was exposed to only two years later. Antoñita had married, and she and her new husband settled into the same house. "Antoñita was soon quite obviously in what was called an interesting condition. The place that children came from was no mystery to me, although I was only seven or eight years old. I was already a calm materialist" (*Persons and Places* 124). The pregnancy went beyond term and ended with a hideously protracted labor, a still birth, and the death of Antoñita, all within earshot and sometimes within view of the little boy. He saw the corpse of the baby "in a small wooden box that might have held soap or candles, a dead child lying naked, pale yellowish green. Most beautiful, I thought

him, as large and perfectly formed as the Child Jesus in the pictures; except that where the navel ought to be he had a little mound like an acorn, with a long string hanging out of it" (125).

Seventy years later, reflecting on these events in *Persons and Places*, Santayana speaks of how material accidents affect our destinies, that man and "other unhappy mammals . . . must be cast out into the glare and cold, to be defeated by a thousand accidents, derailed, distorted, taught and trained to be enemies to themselves, and to prevent themselves from ever existing" (125). And so, added to a propensity toward reserve, stoicism, and fatalism that he had inherited both genetically and culturally, we find Santayana as a small child being conditioned to accept the harsh reality of our subordination to the material conditions of existence, to the irrational flux of substance that both favors and thwarts our inner possibilities. He learned that

> every living creature remains miserable and vicious, so long as in serving other things it has to suppress itself: and if that alien world must needs be served, the only happy solution and one that nature often finds, would be for the unfit species to perish outrightthere is nothing ignoble in perishingand for a different species to appear whose freedom and happiness would lie in contact with those particular circumstances and mastery over them. (126)

And yet his account of these years, though heavy with premature experience, retains a light touch, an almost comic buoyancy at times, and is quite free of the sardonic, the bitter, the pessimistic. The landscape around Avila might not be lush, but there was a reassuring solidity: "too austere to be beautiful, too dry and barren; yet it reveals eloquently the stone skeleton of the earth; not a dead skeleton like the mountains of the moon but like the

mountains of Greece, vivified at least by the atmosphere, and still rich in fountains and in hidden fields." His early experience made him acutely conscious of the material limitations within which our lives must ultimately be constrained, and yet kept him aware that without matter, nothing whatever can existthat the spirit itself is dependent on, and springs out of, these circumstances.

Santayana's survey of the realm of matter occupied him for several decades. In the chapter titled "Mechanism" (in *Reason in Science*), he uses terms such as *irrational, hopeless, vital, disjointed, opaque, inexorable,* andcontinually*flux* to communicate his apprehension of the existential process of the universe. Santayana is so frequently thought of as the aloof, retiring Harvard professoror resident philosopher of the Piazza Barberini in later yearsthat one tends to forget just how much jostling and dislocation his realm of matter had exposed him

to over the years, and with what regularity his chosen vocabulary reflects this experience. Even in the chapter just cited, the main concern of which is to account for the apparent presence of rational relationships (physical laws) in nature, he insists that those laws are themselves irrational habits that the flux of things exhibits:

> Mechanism might be called the dialectic of the irrational. It is such a measure of intelligibility as is compatible with flux and with existence. Existence itself being irrational and change unintelligible, the only necessity they are susceptible of is a natural or empirical necessity, impinging at both ends upon brute matters of fact. The existential elements, their situation, number, affinities, and mutual influence all have to be begged before calculation can begin. When these surds have been accepted at their face value, inference may set to work among them; yet the inference that mechanism will continue to reign will not amount to certain knowledge until the event inferred has come to give it proof. Calculation in physics differs from pure dialectic in that the ultimate object it looks to is not ideal. Theory here must revert to the immediate flux for its sanction. (7778)

A lengthy footnote in the middle of *Reason in Science* encapsulates what Santayana took to be previous uses of the term *matter* and his criticisms of those uses. As is his custom, he takes the word and redefines it for his own purposes, or to suit his own experience. Following a dichotomy that parallels his distinctions between physical psychology and literary psychology, he first points to the difference between matter as a concretion of particles and matter as a (conceptualized) substance out of which something else may be made. The distinction here is between Democritus and Aristotle, between physics and

dialectic, between matter as something already existing and matter as material out of which something else may be made, between matter as fulfillment and matter as possibility. Note that the distinction here is not one that Santayana himself accepts; he is pointing out two conflicting or contradictory uses of the term. Having done this, he moves quickly to criticize a third (and always, for him, more noxious) misconceived applicationthe tendency of those who profess philosophical idealism to elevate what is actually a material impulse within the organism to the status of an external material force, "giving it a grander name . . . pure feeling, absolute consciousness, or metaphysical will." Santayana seems to see idealism, in this context, as a perversion of Aristotle's dialectical use of *matter*. Conversely, as he says at this point, "A natural philosopher is on dangerous ground when he uses psychological or moral terms in his calculation" (*Reason in Science* 100).

The effort expended by Santayana, across the years and in the course of a score of books, to heal the rift opened by Descartes and levered ever wider by the succession of German philosophers from Kant to Nietzsche, is evident here:

> The existential element in mental facts is not so remote from matter as Descartes imagined. Even if we are not prepared to admit with Democritus that matter is what makes them up (as it well might if "matter" were taken in a logical sense) we should agree that their substance is in mechanical flux, and that their form, by which they become moral unities, is only an ideal aspect of that moving substance. Moral unities are created by a point of view, as right and left are, and for that reason are not efficacious. (*Reason in Science* 100102)

Since the last sentence in this passage begins to carry us in the direction of Santayana's moral philosophy, and since the relation of matter and morality (again, a term used in his ownmostly Spinozisticmanner) is crucial to an understanding of his philosophy, I will quote one more passage from *Reason in Science* that illuminates the relation:

> No existence is of moment to a man, not even his own, unless it touches his will and fulfills or thwarts his intent. Unless he is concerned that existences should be of specific kinds, unless he is interested in form, he can hardly be interested in being. At the very least in terms of pleasure versus pain, light versus darkness, comfort versus terror, the flying moment must be loaded with obloquy or excellence if its passage is not to remain a dead fact, and to sink from the sphere of actuality altogether into that droning limbo of potentialities that we call matter. (167)

Matter as such, then, is neither good nor evil; material events take

on moral significance only as they favor or frustrate a particular organismor, in Santayana's terms, *psyche*. Matter in itself is a blind, irrational, fertile, powerful, incomprehensible flux, a groundswell of existence, not to be explained or understood by us, and assuredly not something that any one animal is to imagine itself the author of.

In 1910 appeared the book that has given more readers a taste of Santayana's materialism and in a more palatable form than any other, his *Three Philosophical Poets*. Here all that was necessary (to illustrate his concept of matter) was that he provide a superior introduction and commentary on Lucretius, whose poetry and views had become congenial to him. "The great master of sympathy with nature, in my education, was Lucretius," he wrote in *My Host the World* (134).

In *Three Philosophical Poets*, which he wrote forty years earlier, he credits the author of *De Rerum Natura* with a fundamental insight:

> This double experience of mutation and recurrence, an experience at once sentimental and scientific, soon brought with it a very great thought, perhaps the greatest thought that mankind has ever hit upon, and which was the chief inspiration of Lucretius. It is that all we observe about us, and ourselves also, may be so many passing forms of a permanent substance. This substance, while remaining the same in quantity and in inward quality, is constantly redistributed; in its redistribution it forms these aggregates which we call things, and which we find constantly disappearing and reappearing. . . .
>
> . . . To perceive universal mutation, to feel the vanity of life, has always been the beginning of seriousness. . . .
>
> To discover substance, then, is a great step in the life of reason. (2324)

In the discussion that follows, he elaborates his earlier note in *Reason in Science*. Santayana's concept of how matter was understood and reverenced by the early atomists and the Ionic philosophers is worth quoting at some length.

> So far, Greek science had made out that the world was one, that this was a physical substance, distributed and moving in space. It was matter. The question remained, What is the precise nature of matter, and how does it produce the appearances we observe? The only answer that concerns us here is that given by Lucretius; an answer he accepted from Epicurus, his master in everything, who in turn had accepted it from Democritus. Now Democritus had made a notable advance over the systems that selected one obvious substance, like water, or collected all the obvious substances, as Anaxagoras had

done, and tried to make the world out of them. Democritus thought that the substance of everything ought not to have any of the qualities present in some things and absent in others; it ought to have only the qualities present in all things. It should be merely matter. Materiality, according to him, consisted of extension, figure, and solidity. . . .

Unlike the useless substance of the Indians, the substance of Democritus could offer a calculable ground for the flux of appearances; for this substance was distributed unequally in the void, and was constantly moving. Every appearance, however fleeting, corresponded to a precise configuration of substance; it arose with that configuration and perished with it. This substance, accordingly, was physical, not metaphysical. It was no dialectical term, but a scientific anticipation, a prophecy as to what an ob-

> server who should be properly equipped would discover in the interior of bodies. Materialism is not a system of metaphysics; it is a speculation in chemistry and physiology, to the effect that, if analysis could go deep enough, it would find that all substance was homogeneous, and that all motion was regular. (*Three Philosophical Poets* 2527)

Writing on William James, in *Character and Opinion in the United States*, Santayana said that "physics and mathematics seem to me to plunge far deeper than literary psychology into the groundwork of this world" (72). By insisting on the primacy of existing matter, Santayana was setting himself firmly against the "pure experience" of Jamesthe concept of some sort of fusion of physical and psychical reality, which was actually a subordination of matter not just to mind, in the abstract, but to the human mind and to human purposes. In place of this, Santayana recognized the primal authority of matter itself, of a source and principle of power out of which we found ourselves to be created, but the creation of which we were not permitted to arrogate to ourselves. (One might compare Santayana's relation to James on this point with that of Marx to Hegel.) Santayana found James turned inside out and reversed him to put the seamy side back where it belonged. He argued that James refused to push his own theories to their logical conclusionsthat if James were to argue that emotions were purely physiological states, he would have to believe in a rigidly mechanistic universe, and James's generous and credulous nature rebelled at this. James, he thought, wanted to believe in a dramatic reciprocation of energies between mind and matteran immersion in a cosmic process in which God and human nature were equal partners, a sort of

dynamic interchange that was a reflection of the energetic plunge into experience and activity celebrated by Americans from Walt Whitman to Theodore Roosevelt.

The metaphor of the ocean voyageand the reality of being at the mercy of the waveswas for Santayana a recurrent image of the individual animal's dependence on the ebb and flow of the vast ocean of matter, human passengers literally being caught up in that irrational tumult. It is therefore amusing to see him using such figures of speech to characterize the (for him, erroneous) vision of the psychophysical maelstrom conjured up by the Jamesian philosophy of experience. To Santayana, James's experiential flux seemed something of a tempest in an inkpot.

> To pursue this path, however, would have led him to admit that nature was automatic and mind simply cognitive, conclusions from which every instinct in him recoiled. He preferred to believe that mind and matter had independent energies and could lend one another a hand. . . . This impli-

> cation was that experience or mental discourse not only constituted a set of substantive facts, but the *only* substantive facts; all else, even that material world which his psychology had postulated, could be nothing but a verbal or fantastic symbol for sensations in their experienced order. . . . That flux itself, therefore, which he could picture so vividly, was the fundamental existence. The *sense* of bounding over the waves, the *sense* of being on an adventurous voyage, was the living fact; the rest was dead reckoning. (*Character and Opinion* 7071)

So for Santayana, James had mistakenly ascribed to the mental world, to human consciousness, to the realm of spirit, characteristics that belonged in the realm of matter.

The vocabulary that Santayana resorts to when he characterizes matter is in fact quite similar to what he found James using in connection with the flood of experience that he believed himself to be immersed in. In the chapter "Percept and Concept" (from *Some Problems of Philosophy*), James wrote:

> The perceptual flux as such, on the contrary, *means* nothing, and is but what it immediately is. . . . Its boundaries are no more distinct than are those in the field of vision. Boundaries are things that intervene; but here nothing intervenes save parts of the perceptual flux itself, and these are overflowed by what they separate, so that whatever we distinguish and isolate conceptually is found to telescope and compenetrate and diffuse into its neighbors. The cuts we make are purely ideal. If my reader can succeed in abstracting from all conceptual interpretation and lapse back into his immediate sensible life at this very moment, he will find it to be what someone has called a big blooming buzzing confusion, as free from contradiction in its 'much-at-onceness' as it is all alive and evidently there. (4950)

That there was some sort of protracted dialogue occurring between Santayana and James is evident in the lengthy footnote that occurs three pages further on in which James mostly quotes Santayana's description of Platonism from *Interpretations and Poetry and Religion*, identifies it with Aristotle's view of Plato, and seems to question both Plato and Santayana's view of Plato.

Some years later, when he came to write *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, Santayana took James's advice to "lapse back into his immediately sensible life," but discovered no big blooming buzzing confusion. Instead, he found himself in the presence of his eternal essences and, rather than feeling himself a part of any flux, discovered the "solipsism of the present moment." It was the leap of animal faith that brought him back into touch with the realm of matter. Yet mat-

ter or substance was in no sense a creation of the believing mind; to believe in it was to recognize a power outside oneself and, furthermore, the power that had brought oneself into existence and had made that recognition possible.

To return to Santayana's treatment of Lucretius, we find him exclaiming, "[H]ow marvelous the swarming atoms, in their unintentional, perpetual fertility!" (*Three Philosophical Poets* 37). And further on he writes, "The word nature has many senses; but if we preserve the one which etymology justifies, and which is the most philosophical as well, nature should mean the principle of birth or genesis, the universal mother, the great cause or system of causes, that brings phenomena to light" (5657).

When *Scepticism and Animal Faith* appeared in 1923, it included a chapter titled "Belief in Substance," where one might expect to find a précis of Santayana's views. Instead, the argument proceeds with a curious evasiveness and indirection that, while it builds cumulatively toward a complete statement about matter, makes quoting from it awkward. It is, however, possible to summarize the argument:

1. All knowledge is knowledge of existing things; all existing things are substances.

2. Modern philosophers substitute mental phenomena for substantial facts. They mistakenly attribute existence to what are really essences. No true skepticism is possible under these conditions because to be skeptical of existence is to deny one's own existence as well as to deny all knowledge. The baby

(knowledge) goes out with the bathwater (existence). (The figure of speech is mine, not Santayana's.)

3. Santayana, however, has no problems in admitting the existence both of himself and of substance.

4. "As a matter of fact, the active ego is an animal living in a material world" (184). The shocks of existing substance upon existing substance (the animal, in the second instance) "shakes the ego out of its primitive somnolence" (185). This discredits the "absolute freedom in madness" of romantic or idealistic philosophy.

5. It is not possible to prove the existence of substance, and yet it is not possible to disbelieve in it. Sudden shocks make us aware that we are not self-created and that we did not create the agency that produces the shock.

6. We believe in the reality, the substantial existence, of things before we begin to reflect upon their qualities: "an animal is aware that something is happening long before he [or she] can say to himself [or herself] what that something is, or what it looks like." Santayana is implying that in place of the presumptuousness of Descartes's "I think, therefore I am," we substitute the more

humble and true admission: "Something is going on that I did not start." That something is matter.

Santayana concludes his chapter with these words:

> I am a sensitive creature surrounded by a universe utterly out of scale with myself: I must, therefore, address it questioningly but trustfully, and it must reply to me in my own terms, in symbols and parables, that only gradually enlarge my childish perceptions. It is as if Substance said to Knowledge: My child, there is a great world for thee to conquer, but it is a vast, an ancient, and a recalcitrant world. It yields wonderful treasures to courage, when courage is guided by art and respects the limits set to it by nature. I should not have been so cruel as to give thee birth, if there had been nothing for thee to master; but having first prepared the field, I set in thy heart the love of adventure. (191)

In the next chapter of *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, titled "Objections to Belief in Substance," Santayana answers some of those objections (of philosophical empiricists and idealists) and anticipates the theological interpretation of matter with which he ultimately concluded *The Realms of Being* some fifteen years later: "Yet, as religion shows, it is possible for the spirit to be tamed and chastened. The fear of substance is the beginning of wisdom" (206).

In *Dialogues in Limbo* (1926), Santayana restated his views on matter or substance in a form that is more direct and less technical and qualified than in the chapters just mentioned. The character of "The Stranger" speaks for Santayana, representing his views plausibly to the shades of other philosophers, and in a form that was meant to popularize them. John McCormick's amusing remark on the book is certainly true: "Since dialogue

involves drama, which was beyond Santayana's reach, the book is like a community picnic to which everyone brings a potato salad" (267). But at least we do not go away starved.

> The flux of matter brings now one idea and now another to the surface; and it is matter in us, and not reason or spirit, that struggles to bring one form into existence here and another there, or to defend and preserve it. . . . Meantime only two principles endure perpetually in the universe: the flux of matter in which every life is formed and dissolved, and the pure spirit which, chained to the mast like Odysseus among the Sirens, looks out upon the strange scene. (*Dialogues in Limbo* 153)

The image of Odysseus may give a false impression here; Santayana regularly insisted that matter was a necessary groundwork and home for the spirit and that to see it as a constraint on the spirit was to misunderstand the nature of both:

> Of all men I am the last to belittle the world of matter or to condemn it. I feel towards it the most unfeigned reverence and piety, as to Hestia, Aphrodite, Prometheus, and all the gods of generation and art; for I know that matter, the oldest of beings, is the most fertile, the most profound, the most mysterious; it begets everything, and cannot be begotten; but it is proper to spirit to be begotten of all other things by their harmonies, and to beget nothing in its turn. (230)

It is no accident that the language in the last quotation assumes some of the resonances of the Nicene Creed. In the "General Review of *Realms of Being*," which he appended to *The Realm of Spirit* in the one-volume edition of *Realms of Being*, Santayana finally made explicit what must have been a tacit assumption for more than a half-century: "This assault of reality, in the force of whatever exists of happens, I call matter or the realm of matter; but evidently this very power is signified by the First Person of the Trinity, the Father, almighty creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible" (846). The parallelism of other realmsessence and spiritwith the Son and the Holy Ghost are tentatively sketched or adumbrated. Wary of presumption or heresy, he refuses to separate Father and Son into matter and essence: "If we interpret in this way the Father to be power and the Son to be form, we see at once how the essence or quality of each is independent and incomparable, while their existence is one and inseparable" (847). Identification of the Holy Ghost with spirit he makes more confidently (as he did the Father with matter): "In other words, the Holy Ghost is not the first person of the Trinity, but the third, proceeding both from the Father and from the Son. Consciousness is a gift of nature, happiness is a fruit of piety and order: and spirit, being the final fruit of

existence, absolutely needs the other realms to evoke and to feed it" (852).

8
The Realm of Spirit
The Last Puritan

I recast, I re-live, I entirely transform the characters. They are creatures of imagination.

Santayana always insisted that the characters in *The Last Puritan* spoke a language that was close to the normal conversation between educated peoplethat they conversed in a manner that he had often heard when he was growing up. He anticipated, and perhaps attempted to disarm in advance, those reviewers of his novel who felt that the dialogue was stilted, contrived, artificial, and overburdened with intellectual issues when he makes Mario Van der Weyer complain in the epilogue:

> *You put in my mouth a lot of good things of your own, or of Howard Sturgis's, or of other friends of yours. Moreover, in general, you make us all talk in your own philosophical style, and not in the least as we actually jabber.* (600 [570])

And he lets himself answer in the next paragraph:

> *I have made you all speak the lingo natural to myself, as Homer made all his heroes talk in Ionian hexameters. Fiction is fiction, poetry is inspiration, and every word should come from the poet's heart, not out of the mouths of other people. . . . So with the characters themselves, I am not photographing real people and changing their names. On the contrary, where discretion permits, I keep the real names and the real places, just as Homer does. Real names have a wonderful atmosphere. But I recast, I re-live, I entirely*

> *transform the characters. They are creatures of imagination.* (600601 [57071])

His insistencethat the entire novel is a projection of his own spiritual adventuressurfaces at the end, where once more he introduces himself as a character. He did not push this device to Sterne-like absurdities; his only appearance in the body of the narrative occurs about midway, when he mentions himself

as the professor in a course for which his protagonist has registered, and includes an essay by his "student," Oliver Alden. But in a final playful reversal, he concludes his book by having Mario quote himself *to* himself:

> *You have said it somewhere yourself, though I may misquote the words*: After life is over and the world has gone up in smoke, what realities might the spirit in us still call its own without illusion save the form of those very illusions which have made up our story? (602 [572])

Until I had reviewed these closing sentences of *The Last Puritan*, I had been unable to decide to which of Santayana's realms (spirit or truth) one ought to assign the novel. Although one is not obliged to abide by Santayana's own blueprint, it is appropriate to submit to his perspective where that will work. *Spirit* seemed a reasonable choice, since what fascinates one throughout the book is the nature of and interplay between the various sorts of consciousness, awareness, or personalityand especially the life of its protagonist, Oliver Alden, as an adventure of deepening consciousness, a romance of the spirit. This makes it not exactly a *bildungsroman* but a novel of discovery, especially of self-discovery. Santayana evidently enjoyed *The Magic Mountain*, and his acquaintance with Mann's novel may have encouraged his writing a novel of ideas and self-awareness. As such, *The Last Puritan* would seem to belong to his realm of spirit, *spirit* for Santayana being roughly equal to *consciousness*.

But there was another possibility: Santayana might have agreed with Aristotle that the truth of poetry (drama, fiction) is higher

than that of history. Might it not be possible to treat the novel as belonging to the realm of truth?

As if to answer this question directly, Santayana has himself saying in the epilogue: "The truth cannot help triumphing at the last judgment. Perhaps it cannot triumph before. Perhaps, while life lasts, in order to reconcile mankind with reality, fiction in some directions may be more needful than truth" (600 [570]). Here we are back on the ground of *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*: that art and religion are all spread along one continuum of human activity; both serve to direct our attention toward imaginative ideals, toward those modes of being that increase our perfection as human creatures. Art and religion, then, both belong to the realm of the human spirit. The values found here are partial and relative, meaningful in terms of the characters in the storyand above all in relation to the storyteller himself. The realm of truth, on the other hand, would have to include a great deal more. *Truth*, as Santayana uses the word, is much too extensive to be comprehended by any novel and does not even belong in a novel, except to the extent that it assists with the fiction, with the life of the spirit. My own enterprise will be an attempt to tell the truth about *The Last Pu-*

ritan in terms of its author. There are risks in this approach. Santayana's playful irony in his metaphorical remark that truth would triumph "at the last judgment" also carries a warning about the hubris of self-established tribunals, of self-appointed judges who pretend to finality.

The truth about *The Last Puritan* is complex. Its author was a philosopher of great subtlety, an unusually complex personality, and a person whose contacts with other personalities, countries, languages, and customs continued for many years and were extremely varied. In 1932 he told his friend, Mrs. Toy, "The characters have grown up of themselves during these forty years (all of them aren't quite so old)" (*Letters* 270). How many writers give a first novel to the world at the age of seventy-three, peopled with characters whom he has synthesized from at least fifty years of experience? Is there another novelist, besides Thomas Mann, in whose works cultural history receives such exhaustive attention? Recall that the earlier chapters of *The Last Puritan* were originally composed in the 1890s, long before Santayana could have perused Mann's *kulturroman*. Are there many other works of literature, besides those that Santayana dealt with in *Three Philosophical Poets*, that deserve to be called philosophical literature? How many writers have been fluent in as many languages and as conversant with life in as many European countries as Santayana? How many human beings have possessed the self-discipline that made it possible for him to arrive at estimates of so many other human beings that are frankly personal, sometimes remorseless (as well as affectionate), but unusually just?

I would not argue that *The Last Puritan* outshines all, or even much, of the competition. As fiction, it occupies a modest niche among its precursors in the realistic mode; one thinks of Howells, James, and Wharton. To the extent that it dramatizes a transatlantic interfamilial struggle of American versus European values, it could well be called derivative of Henry James. There are a hundred other American novels, at least, an acquaintance with which is more essential to a literary education. I would never find as much to say about *An American Tragedy* as I will about *The Last Puritan*, yet if it came down to which work deserved to be preservedas art, not as philosophyI would have to choose Dreiser's, for all its atrocious inelegance the better novel, the more fundamentally valuable comment on the human condition, especially the American condition. But I would argue that one can learn more from Santayana than from Dreiserin the sense that one can learn more from Lucretius than from Homer.

The Last Puritan exemplifies Santayana's realm of spirit. The spirit is Santayana's own. The novel is a panoply of his own ideals, an extended exposition of his own point of view. It is lively and readable. It can be enjoyed as a good story in the course of which we meet memorable, three-dimensional characters.

But more than most works of fiction, it reflects totally the author's own personality, opinions, and experiencewithout being, in the usual sense, autobiographical. Santayana set Dante above Shakespeare partly because he felt that Dante had committed himself personally to his work in a way that Shakespeare did not; in this, he emulates Dante. His characters live; as a novelist, he has imparted the requisite vitality. But the novel is less a free, creative extension of life itself than a comprehensive expression of Santayana's own nature.

In 1936 Santayana wrote to William Lyon Phelps:

> [T]he hardest thing for an author, especially when he has lived as long as I have with his characters45 yearsis to conceive how they will seem to other people, when conveyed to them only by *words*. I have pictures, quite as distinct as memories; and my characters *speak to me*, I don't have to prompt them. This doesn't contradict the fact which you mention, and I point to in the *Epilogue*, that these characters speak my language, *and are in some sense masks for my own spirit*. [my emphasis] (*Letters* 304)

He goes on to defend, in detail, the way that he makes his people speak and argues that various readers have been able to identify distinctive voices in some of the characters. It is this letter in which he expresses his gratification that Frank Russell's third wife "at once recognized her late husband in Jim: 'Whose person and conversation,' she writes, 'are somehow curiously familiar.' And surely Irma and Mrs. Alden are not echoes of myself" (*Letters* 3045).

To say that *The Last Puritan* expresses Santayana's own spirit is not to argue that, in turning novelist, the philosopher

inadvertently lapsed into an egotistical transcendentalism. He championed the private perspective, but the private perspective as a chastened and disillusioned respecter of other private perspectives. In *The Last Puritan* he frankly allows himself to dissolve and reconstitute episodes and personalities, indulging his own imagination, ordering his fictional world according to his wishes. Because of this, there is a temptation to treat his novel as if he were using it to document his own life, to forget the warnings left to us by an earlier generation of critics against the biographical fallacy. In his autobiographical writings, Santayana did aim to express *truth* more than *spirit;* he never lost sight of the fact that he would inevitably fictionalize some of the truth but argued that fidelity to one's own perspective was itself a form of truth. By scanning the indexes of the three volumes of his autobiography, anyone may easily recover several references to young men who, in various ways, served Santayana as models for Oliver Alden, the protagonist of the novel; and in reading the volumes, one encounters from time to time snatches of detail, facets of behavior or personality, that he obviously made use of in his novel,

prior to setting them down as part of the story of his own life. But this does not mean that a biographical interpretation is especially useful in dealing with the novel.

In addition to those young men mentioned in *Persons and Places*, there were others. Writing to William Lyon Phelps, Santayana said:

> An important element in the *tragedy* of Oliver (not in his personality, for he was no poet) is drawn from the fate of a whole string of Harvard poets in the 1880's and 1890'sSanborn, Philip Savage, Hugh McCullough, Trumbull Stickney, and Cabot Lodge: also Moody, although he lived a little longer and made some impression, I believe, as a playwright. . . . People individually were kind and appreciative to them, as they were to me; but the system was deadly, and they hadn't any alternative tradition (as I had) to fall back upon: and of course as I believe I said of Oliver in my letter, they hadn't the strength of a great intellectual hero who can stand alone. (*Letters* 306)

There is always considerable interest in tracing the originals of any fictional character; whole academic careers have been built on the identification of the models for *The Canterbury Tales*, for example. Santayana himself was not averse to this sort of approach, replying cheerfully to John W. Yolton, in 1951, "I should like nothing better than to be able to discuss with you the characters in *The Last Puritan*. I could tell you much about their origin" (*Letters* 410). No doubt, a study of Santayana's incredible output of unpublished correspondence will turn up more hints or asides that indicate just whom he had in mind at just which point. The notes appended to the recently published critical edition of *The Last Puritan* (1994) list the names that I have just

mentioned, as well as some of the others that I will be introducing below, but there is still room for a comprehensive survey of the literal models.

The labor of character synthesis was carried out mostly in the workshop of the author's own mind, over several decadesnot in notebooks and only to a limited extent in preliminary sketches. All the characters are, to a greater or lesser degree, composites; of Mrs. Alden, Oliver's mother, he told Mrs. Toy, "I can mention four or five persons that have sat for the portrait, and there may be more that have left their impress without my knowledge" (*Letters* 271).

More important than tracking down Santayana's actual models is a demonstration of just how much of his own personality he put into the characters. Consider only Oliver Alden: whatever external images (in the form of actual young men whom he remembered) may have hovered in his imagination, much of Oliver's psychology is a transformed version of his own. This may seem an

extraordinary assertion, given the distance between the author and any form of puritanism, not to speak of innumerable large and obvious differences between Oliver Alden and George Santayana. But I hope to make the case that there is a lot of the younger George in Oliver. This sort of relation between fictional character and author has had other distinguished exemplars: Dickens both is and is not the Pip of *Great Expectations;* Mann both is and is not Tonio Kröger. Santayana carries the process a step further (*further* here does not imply *better* by dispersing himself and his views among several of the characters. With surprising frequency, for example, he puts his own views in the mouth of Oliver's father, Peter Alden. It is surprising because Peter is utterly different both from Oliver and from Santayana himself, as a personality. Those characters who do not speak explicitly for some aspect of Santayana's thought or personality often do represent various human types, or types of solutions to the problem of living, that he had observed and that had figured importantly in his own life, in people whom he had been forced to deal with.

The discussion that follows will optimistically presuppose a recent reading of *The Last Puritan*, which, though it was long out of print, is readily available in used-book stores and libraries and has recently been reissued in both trade and critical editions. The original printings were very large, and the subsequent eclipse of Santayana's fame was never so total as to lead to wholesale pulping of his works. Popular taste, disillusioned and disciplined by the Great Depression, was in this case a reliable indicator of enduring literary value, and the novel remains a very

good read, its charm putting it somewhere between *The Education of Henry Adams* and Proust.

"A Memoir in the Form of a Novel" reads the subtitle to *The Last Puritan*, and we wonder just what this hybrid genre can be. It turns out that George Santayana has succeeded in living vicariously through his recollections of numerous friends and acquaintances of his youth; only in this sense is it a memoir. On the title page appears this epigraph:

> *On dit bien que l'expérience parle par la bouche des hommes d'âge: mais la meilleure expérience qu'ils puissent nous apporter est celle de leur jeunesse sauvée.*
> ALAIN.

*Jeunesse sauvée*salvaged youthcarries multiple meanings even in the original French. For Santayana, it implies not only what he may have been able to rescue from his own youth and from the youthful years of his friends but also how he has imaginatively reconstructedsaved, redeemedthose years, how he has salvaged for himself an ideal youth that he never experienced. One thinks of what Dickens did in *Great Expectations*, where the blacking factory (in

which as a child Charles Dickens had felt himself trapped forever) is deliberately made into an incidental fragment of the novel's background, a trivial detail in a wealthy young gentleman's adventurous life. By creating Pip and giving him money, Dickens symbolically evaded his own early misfortune and repaired the psychological damage done to himself. In Santayana's novel, as in Dickens's, the protagonist is acting out what the author thinks were, or might have been, his own unrealized dreams as a young manand discovers, or is made to discover (as Pip, too, did), that even though he has lived them they are still only dreams, perhaps not even desirable ones. Oliver Alden may represent what Santayanain his early yearsknew that he could not be: born to an old New England family, to inherited wealth, to a physique that would have made him a football hero rather than a dandified spectator. Imagining Oliver was a way that Santayana could live through these experiences. To say this is not to second-guess the author or to suggest that his novel is a half-baked loaf leavened with adolescent wish-fulfilling fantasies; I do think that it provided him (as it did Dickens) with a way of experiencing a youth that once seemed desirable or attractive to him and, thereby, a way of discovering its limitations.

Santayana's personal presence in his novel, then, sometimes shows itself in terms of what he was *not*. One feels this not only with regard to Oliver Alden but also in the character of Mario Van de Weyer, whose warmth, lack of intellectual pretensions, easy-going relations with the ladies, southern European charm, vivaciousness, spontaneity, and lack of reserve epitomize everything that Santayana loved in the Italian character and

everything that (and he was acutely aware of this) other people found lacking in him. This is the other unrealized possibility, the other essence, even more opposite to Oliver than to Oliver's inventor, the unselfconscious creature of the flesh, perfectly at home in the laps and bosoms of the women, having been dandled since infancy. As Mario says to the narrator in the prologue, *"I don't believe Oliver was ever really in love. . . . Women were rather a difficulty to him. He thought he liked them and they thought they liked him; but there was always something wanting. He regarded all women as ladies, more or less beautiful, kind, privileged, and troublesome. He never discovered that ladies are women"* (9 [16]). Mario's innocent and healthy egoism constantly suggest the warm climate of a southern Catholic country; Oliver's puritanism is so moderate that one hesitates to call it self-tormenting, but there is something crabbed and self-defeating in his character, though heroic. Yet both fictional young men are, by ordinary standards, much more normal than their author and provided him with a vicarious existencenot to cheapen Santayana's achievement by reducing it to a senescent wish-fulfillment.

He goes in exactly the opposite direction in the invention of some other

characters. In sketching out the youthful lineaments of Oliver's father, Peter Alden, Santayana does endow him with preferences and habits that were his own. In this case, however, the character is not one he would ever have wished to assume but one that, through the vagaries of material circumstances, he could have imagined escaping. Of Peter, we learn: "He went for solitary walks; he read the minor English poets, Thackery, Montaigne, Don Quixote. In his Freshman year he drifted into the company of those precocious rakes who frequented the front row at musical comedies, and the stage door" (49[54]).

Up to that point, Santayana is sketching in traits that suggest a self-portrait (he did, for example, enjoy the company of the stage-loving undergraduates); but then come a few more strokes, and an entirely different physiognomy begins to emerge: "[B]ut he took these pleasures sadly, and in his tipsy moments would call a friend aside to observe that his only real desire was to fade into the midnight with no pain, and that now more than ever seemed it rich to die. . . . So he might have drifted, sentimental and futile until youth was gone, had not a tragic incident befallen." (49 [54]). This "tragic incident" (when, as part of a prank incidental to initiation into a secret society, Peter accidentally kills a night watchman at Harvard) is most unlike anything Santayana would have got himself mixed up in. Indeed, although he was not hazed or even teased, Santayana never felt himself to be one of the students "of consequence" who could have been invited to join such a society. Also, the Keatsian hankering after oblivion (horrifying in light of Peter's later self-medication and eventual suicide) represented a decadent self-absorption that was never part of Santayana's character.

Yet something of the author reemerges in Peter when we consider his restless voyaging over the surface of the globe, though he strays much further (symbolically, as well as literally) from the frontiers of Christendom than Santayana ever did. There is also a way in which Peter's melancholy resignation both parallels and contrasts with Spanish fatalism, suggesting that, had he been raised in Spain, or just as a Catholic, this tendency might have been rendered firm and realistic rather than self-dramatizing and self-corrupting.

There is another, more interesting, way to explain the personality of Peter Alden. He is a failed William James. "Melancholy gained on him from day to day: any relief to be found in travel or drink or drugs only intensified the gloom and the hopelessness of the next attack." James passed through a crisis similar to this, though at a different point in his life. Like James, Peter takes a medical degree from Harvard, though under very different circumstances. Peter's attitude toward his professional training may partly have been borrowed from Santayana's view of his own graduate work ("by assiduous attendance to duty per-

suade the Harvard Medical School to make me a doctor"), while the choice of the particular discipline sounds like James: "At least the hospitals and insane asylums in America were the best in the world. He would go home and study medicine" (54 [59]).

Peter Alden also resembles James in that neither was a practicing physician, though both held medical degrees. But there is a crucial difference. James turned outward and forward, in a career that was a continuous transition toward what he felt to be ultimately important, raising up for himself a mighty reputation and a numerous following as, successively, a teacher of medicine, a psychologist, and a philosopher. Of Peter, however, we learn:

> He never practised medicine, only put to the proof that misleading adage: Physician, heal thyself. Without being exactly hypochondriacal or imagining symptoms of strange diseases from which he was happily free, he aggravated his real weaknesses by continually dwelling on them. He dosed himself cautiously, but indulgently, drank a good deal, and dismissed, one after another, various sorts of food as dangerous. (56 [61])

This side of Peter is a speculative incarnation of a corrupted William James and, as such, an evil father figurecertainly not the parent that Santayana would have desired to haveor a person whom he would have wished to be. Peter is a self-absorbed, self-indulgent inversion of the practical, outgoing, cheerful side of American character that Santayana admired and enjoyed. He is also very different from the actual William James, whom Santayana knew as well as anyone did. That is precisely the point. Just as Emerson's early-established habits of clean living saved him from the consequences that his opinions implied, so

James could never have degenerated into a Peter Alden. But some of James's spiritual offspring have.

Dr. Alden's life and character also show the degree to which, even in the United States, much could be indulged and forgiven to those who had the right connections and the right amount of money; Santayana could not have helped directing a satirical glance at many of his Harvard classmates and reflecting on what they were able to get away with. When Peter begins to discover evidences in himself of neurotic behavior, he decides to settle into the household of Dr. Bumstead, of Great Falls, Connecticut, whoas a semifailed consulting physician at an asylumis delighted ("This one private patient from Bostona millionairehas been a godsend"). After some months of "treatment," it occurs to Bumstead to propose to his daughter that she marry Alden; there ensues one of those stilted conversations about which Santayana requires that we suspend our

disbelief. Alden's obvious problems are glossed over by both parent and daughter; he tells her: "He's a bit rickety in body and mind; there have been times when he has drunk too much, and indulged in a little cocaine or opium or both; but he's *not* to be regarded as a reformed dipsomaniac or a victim of the drug-habit. It has simply been a little deliberate weakness in prescribing for himself what was most agreeable at the moment" (59 [63]). The kindliness of these remarks is directly proportionate to the amount of money that Peter is master of.

Points of comparison between Peter Alden at the age of forty and his author are much fewer, but Bumstead's further characterization"A club man, a confirmed old bachelor, and one physically in any case not vigorous, not very enthusiastic" (60 [64])sounds a little like Santayana; and Alden's comical resignation in allowing himself to be gathered into the Bumstead family sounds like Santayana's view of what an American marriage would have meant to him: "If I must let some Juggernaut car crush my bones, let it be the old homely steamroller of traditional Puritanism" (62 [66]). There is also more than a touch of sexual ambiguity in Peter's ruminations about Harriet: "As to actual love, and all that, she's a fine female, almost as fine and vigorous as a young male; a little passive, a little sad; somewhat like a blond athlete past his prime" (63 [67]). But in some respects, Peter is a sort of degenerate William James; perhaps the way to put it is that Santayana has, in Peter, imagined how it could have worked out for someone other than James to have been heir to a Jamesian degree of wealth and social connections.

Dr. Alden's more Santayanian side appears as he contemplates the cultural ambiance of America with a good deal of skepticism. He "didn't seem to think Browning a great poet at all" in a town where "The Browning Society [had] become so large and unmanageable, with the Baptist minister and those positively vulgar new women" (69 [73]). These reflections, which run through the mind of the now some-years-married Harriet Bumstead, betray Santayana's amused consciousness of his own reputation as a prominent Browning-basher. In one merciless sentence, Santayana brings together various features of the American scene that had grated on him. As we near the end of part 1, Harriet is reflecting on her duties toward little Oliver, who now has made his appearance, and on the advantages that he will enjoy.

> If the Aldens in recent times had been less pleasantly distinguished than the Bumsteadswith her father' work on Psychiatry world-famous, and so much *sounder* and more *decent* than Krafft-Ebing'syet the Aldens had genuinely come over on the *Mayflower*, and Oliver had the inexpressible

> privilege of being descended from those famous pilgrims, Priscilla and John Alden, immortalised by Longfellow in his household classic, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. (72 [75])

One can understand why so many Americans bought the novel, enjoying its disingenuous mockery of American pretensions; but one can also see how, after a while, some might find the supercilious smile more than they wished to put up with.

Another limitation of the writing appears when Santayana tries to communicate what a normal infancy in a well-appointed household might have been like. His own earliest years were simply too remote, and his own experience with tending babies was, as a lady at the Alliance Française once said of my French, *un peu théorique*. He is elsewhere on safer groundas, for example, when he tells us that "Mrs. Alden's younger brother Harry was at that time pursuing his theological studies at Göttingen, where tepid philosophical currents, set up by the eloquence of Lotze, continued to temper truth to the shorn lamb" (83 [87]). This is the *ipsissima verba* for the climate of sentiment in which Josiah Royce required Santayana to do his dissertation on Lotze, and it provides a satirical snapshot of the very latest in fashionable philosophical clothing that the aspiring young American intellectual could sport at that time.

Santayana's own experience with the spirit of Germany, the German character, is most completely realized in the person of "Fräulein Irma," who falls in love with young Harry, but who learns that he intends to honor his "sacred engagement" to an American girl:

> She felt that she was living through a tragic hour, like the Lotte of

> *Werthers Leiden*, and that, cruel as this sudden blow might be, it was lifting her to a higher plane of heroic life and giving her a deeper, broader, truer spiritual insight. How much better she would plumb henceforth all the wisdom of that great saying of Goethe's *Entbehren sollst Du, sollst entbehren*! And with what a doubly heart-rending but yet nobler note would she sing hereafter *Es war ein Traum* and *Behut' dich Gott, es hat nicht sollen sein!* (84 [88])

Bertrand Russell was probably right in guessing that Santayana secretly hankered to do unto Goethe as he had unto Browning. What we have here is a humorous treatment of tendencies to which he allowed no quarter when they expressed themselves as a philosophy. But it is also clear that the physical warmth, the spontaneous caresses, the generousif self-dramatizingheart of Fräulein Irma represents something that Oliver had, at least for a year or two, and that

his author never did enjoy. She supplies, after she joins the Alden household in America as a nurse for Oliver, a humanity that was missing in American puritanismand a touch of the healthy barbarian, even a danger as well as a consolation.

Others may disagree with him, but Santayana seemed to feel that for pure healthy maternalism, an Irish mother was hard to beat; I suspect that he had been coddled and fussed over by a succession of Irish cleaning ladies in Boston as a child and in London and Oxford as a young man, and that he had taken considerable comfort from their presence. The Irish Catholic presence makes itself felt in the young Alden's life:

> "Mother," said Oliver one day as they were passing the bridge and the boathouse, in front of which Mrs. Murphy was sitting sewing, and holding her youngest sprawling offspring somewhat inconveniently in her lap, "why doesn't she make the baby sit on the bench?" (103 [107])

Considerable discussion ensues, with Oliver arguing that the "baby" is almost as big as he is and Mrs. Alden finally settling the question with "They get almost to *like* huddling together. It's repulsive, and so bad for the little one's health, and so uncomfortable. But ignorant people are like that." But Oliver is not satisfied: "Far, far in a dim past, as if it had been in another world or in a pre-natal condition, Oliver remembered the long-denied privilege of sitting in his mother's lap" (104 [107]). Here, surely, is more evidence of Santayana's own sensory deprivation as a child, consciously salvaged from his memories and made part of young Oliver's psyche. In the author's own case, much that happened was a result of accident; with Oliver, it is

deliberate planning, the theoretical approach to child-rearing that many Americans seem incapable of abandoning, except by doing so on purpose. What the vagaries of the material world did to Santayana as a child, the strictures of American puritanism are doing to Oliver, but the effect is different; for Santayana, it brought him progressively into the immediacy of the eternal essences; for Oliver, it was a separation of spirit from flesh, making him an outsider from himself:

> in the real world, where you sat alone and were going to the dentist's, the centre seemed to be cold and only the circumference friendly and congenial: an untouchable world where rivers flowed, and tugs whistled, and bright brown boats and canoes were moored together to the landing-stage, like bunches of bananas, and Mrs. Murphy sat sewing in the sunshine, and pressing her child to her broad bosom. (104 [108])

Mrs. Alden's distaste for the fleshly side of existence gradually imposes itself on Oliver. As a baby, he had been put under the astringent supervision of a Miss Tirkettle, whose job is to find something for him to do, since there "were no other children to play with. The nearest neighbors were not friends of Mrs. Alden's, and their children would not have been well-behaved or well-spoken, and probably rough and dirty" (78 [82]). The gardener has a dog, whom Letitia Lamb has named "Fuzzy-Wuzzy." But Mrs. Alden feels bound to prune away all adventitious shoots of Letitia's fatuous kindliness, and that includes Fuzzy-Wuzzy: "They [Mrs. Alden and Miss. Tirkettle] couldn't pronounce the horrid word, but they looked at each other significantly. The dog had *fleas*" (79 [83]). Oliver's imagination also is to be kept under strict control: "Miss Tirkettle was scientifically trained; she knew no songs, no stories, no prayers. . . . Poetry and mythology and religion have nothing to do with *life*" (79 [83]).

Peter Alden takes an opposite, but not better, point of view, arguing that Oliver needs the stimulation of imaginative literature and that Gulliver and Sinbad the Sailor "will simply fill his fancy pleasantly, and accustom him to enjoy intellectually what is enjoyable in the worldwhich is mighty little" (81 [84]). He, in other words, would prepare Oliver for a life of self-indulgent leisure, the same indolent hedonism that has been his vocation. However, "In spite of the coldness and distance between Peter Alden and his wife, with deep distrust on her part and perfect indifference on his, they agreed in many matters of policy, and especially in regard to the education of Oliver" (112 [115]). They agree that he must be made into a typical young American, his

mother's view being that this is his highest calling and his father's, that this will provide "protective coloring" to help him to enjoy himself more.

Between them, they succeed in introducing a schism, a sort of internal heresy, that begins to manifest itself in Oliver's nature. Employing a touch of symbolism that is similar to, though less intrusive than, the wheelchair in *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, Santayana has Oliver wean himself away from his animal origins, learning to prefer his bicycle to his pony "Dumpy." Fräulein Irma has made her appearance in the family at that point, and (despite providing a semblance of instinctive emotional warmth) she, too, contributes to the self-alienation: "Thus without knowing italthough Fräulein may have dropped some hints to that effectOliver anticipated the maxims of Goethe, and sacrificed his heart to his self-development" (112 [115]).

But how can we connect all this with Santayana himself? To start with, we can reiterate that what the Aldens do to Oliver, as a matter of (conflicting and inconsistent) principles, is what a different sort of fate did to little Jorge; he drew

on his own experience in imagining Oliver's alienation from his own natural sources. Also, Santayana was often a houseguest of New England families that in some particulars resembled the Aldens, and he was a lifelong friend, or at least philosophical companion, of C. A. Strong, who came from such a family. He was well equipped to synthesize the Alden household and, as we shall see in more depth in the following chapter, to account to himself for the philosophical, religious, and cultural determinants of the family's behavior. As an outsider, as one who was admitted to native family circles and whose connections were severed, he developed the habit of observing their ways dispassionately, thereby anatomizing American culture.

What we have, then, is a combining of Santayana's ironic observation of his young American contemporaries with his own inner life. Or we might say that his radical detachment from any intimacy made it possible for Santayana to enter with complete sympathy into Oliver's predicament. This permitted simultaneous engagement and disengagement of author and protagonist.

Oliver enjoyed many attachments that his author lackedbut the impoverished puritan tradition made a satisfying life impossible in spite of these "advantages." Santayana was in a very different situation from that of his hero in terms of his family life. But he felt that the context of Catholic civilization, even for a nonbelieving naturalist, more than made up for the abnormality of his early years, for the external estrangements. Such a civilization, the legitimate inheritance of what was best in Greece and Rome, had (he felt) enabled him to rationalize and harmonize his own life in a way that was impossible for Oliver,

despite the latter's wealth, family, good looks, physical robustness, and sturdy character. As he said in the letter to William Lyon Phelps: "It was Oliver, not I, who didn't love life, because he hadn't the animal Epicurean faculty of enjoying it in its arbitrariness and transiency. He was a spiritual man, incapacitated to be anything else, like Christ. . . . [P]oor Oliver, ready for every sacrifice, had nothing to pin his allegiance to" (*Letters* 305).

There are moments when Santayana does not refrain from explicitalmost moralizinganalysis: "In his boyhood, though word and ideas were lacking to express it, this puritan disdain of human weakness and of human genius was at work silently within him. It caused him to do his languages and history in a perfunctory way, with a certain inward and growing estrangement" (*Last Puritan* 11415 [117]). In his own way, and for his own reasons, Dr. Alden does try to woo Oliver away from a disdainful unworldliness, first by giving him a polo pony and then by putting him under the tutelage of Mr. Denis Murphy, a former world sculling champion, to whom Santayana assigns the soundest assessment of the adolescent Oliver's personality: "Afterwards Denis Murphy would say to

his wife, 'That kid of Dr. Alden's a deep one. He won't live to be old. The likes of him isn't made for this world. Pity he's being brought up a heathen.'" (121 [124]). Santayana's humorous puritan-baiting as a Catholic sympathizer (*heathen*, of course, meaning *Protestant*) should not obscure the tragic seriousness of the predicament developing in Oliver's soul.

In a decision that is replete with paradoxesone of them being that, in her spite and sarcasm on the subject of boarding schools, Mrs. Alden actually stumbles on some of Santayana's own opinionsthe decision is made to enter Oliver in the public high school. Here we unexpectedly encounter one of the few direct approximations of Santayana's own life to that of his protagonistthe experience of being an outsider in a new school and of not sharing the cultural values of his classmates. But it is a greatly modified version of Santayana's experience, since Oliver's fellow students are "so many small editions of Mr. Denis Murphy, and he rather liked them for that. . . . Their brogue too was something like Mr. Murphy's, only shriller, uglier, and more aggressive" (124 [127]).

There are at least three other ways in which this introduction to life in Great Falls High School makes one think of Santayana. First, like Oliver, "His own natural speech was that of ladies and clergymen" (124 [127]). People often remarked, and Santayana knew well himself that it was true, that he had no accent, though at least one person compared his intonation to that of Queen Victoria. Second, there is the view of the professional educator: "Most schoolmasters were people who had failed in the world, or who feared to fail in it" (124 [126]). And third, there is the

fondness that Santayana always felt for unaffectedly physical male naturethe fondness that attracted him to Daniel Cory, to Byron, to the Saturday-afternoon heroes of the Harvard football team, and most unfortunately, to the male chauvinism of Mussolini's regimented young Italians. Oliver does not feel uncomfortable with the pupils but only with the masters: "[T]hey looked like poor monsters embarrassed by their pachyderms, with perhaps a spark of natural boyish soul still smouldering within" (125 [128]).

Oliver, as I have noted, makes his way and gains distinction in these surroundings by fulfilling a possibility never open to his author: that of the football hero. And yet even here there is something of Santayana's self-assertiveness, his healthy egoism: "Murmurs that might otherwise have gathered force, to the effect that he was a sissy or a snob or a coward, were entirely silenced: the more in that in a first encounter with the rowdy gangwhich he soon learned to distinguish from the decent or neutral elementshis unexpected quickness in the manly arts had discouraged open hostility" (128 [130]). There are persistent reports of Santayana's defending himself ably as a boy, sometimes by throwing

stones, sometimes by using words in the same way. Baker Brownell's account has the ring of authenticity:

> He had been a lonely boy in his American home among much older children, and at kindergarten among much younger ones. He had gone though the routine of American education, finding now and then a good or passable teacher. The boys in Boston were wont to tease him in high school, his schoolmate, James Houghton Woods once told me; but a sharp tongue and a fiery temper made him well able to take care of himself. (5253)

To return to *The Last Puritan*: though Oliver's capacity for self-preservation is not affected, emotional ties to his material and animal origins and destinies are already severely disrupted, as they had been for Santayana. We learn from one of Irma's letters home that she has not been permitted to kiss Oliver since he was four years old ("In this country it is wrong to kiss your children!"). In some ways, Santayana has taken traits that he found in his own mother, modified them, and transmuted them into American attitudes toward children and child rearing. In Irma's description of Mrs. Alden, too, we hear something that resembles Santayana's mother's retirement from society: "A handsome woman, little past fifty, who doesn't mind looking old, will never travel or go to a theatre or an evening party or deck herself out in splendid clothes, but wants simply to sit at home, quiet and stately, and to feel perfect!" (13637 [138])

It is just at this point in Oliver's life that he first meets "Lord Jim," Peter Alden's unnaturally youthful yacht captain, "an affable young man, broad-shouldered and ruddy-faced, in a white-topped yachting cap cocked very much over one ear" (141 [142]). It is a commonplace to say that Santayana modeled Jim

Darnley on Frank Russell, Bertrand Russell's most unintellectual older brother, whom Santayana knew so well that he named an entire chapter of his autobiography's second volume, *The Middle Span*, for him. But Santayana was selective in choosing the traits of the elder Russell's character that go into the making of Lord Jim and went to considerable lengths to disguise his source. And it was only one phase of Frank Russell's life that he made use of, as he wrote to William Lyon Phelps in 1936: "For instance, you mustn't say who Jim Darnley is copied from, not only because it is too soon to pillory the dead, but because it is only the young and intimate Russell who is reproduced, not the elderly man with his politics and matrimonial difficulties" (*Letters* 306).

The issue of Santayana's own homosexuality enters here. The ambiguousness of Oliver's attraction to Jim Darnley is an essential (if, at the time of its publication, subliminal) feature of the novel. This must have been what Santa-

yana had in mind in 1936 when he wrote to Robert Shaw Barlow that "the dangerous sides of the bookand it has more than one suchseem to have been overlooked or timidly ignored by the critics. Perhaps in conversation some people discuss these matters, but their comments don't reach me" (*Letters* 309). Eventually, in the 1950s and 1960s, those hostile to the author or those who detected and disliked this side of the novel seized on it to drop ominous intimations about Santayana's secret life. Others, such as W. H. Auden, realized that Santayana treated homosexuality here and elsewhere as a distraction to the healthy psycheand despised him for doing so. Finally, there are other readers who place Santayana in the avant-garde of homosexual liberation. Those in the first and third categories make the simple equation: "Lord Jim" equals Frank Russell, and what goes on in *The Last Puritan* is a disguised account of an affair between George Santayana and Frank Russell.

When Santayana told Daniel Cory that he supposed that, in his own early years at Harvard, he was homosexual, he revealed a part of himself that he put into Oliver; he must have had friendsin that all-male milieuwho fell in love with male companions and who had not (in 1900) any more idea than Walt Whitman had of what was going on. He is also, in painting Oliver, drawing on the infatuation that he certainly did develop at one point for Frank Russell and the fondness that he felt for many others. The mistake that we make, however, is to fail to realize that the very intensity of such relationshipsone thinks of Tennyson and Arthur Hallamdepends on sublimated sexuality, not on anything that ever achieves physical expression. Should someone produce evidence that Santayana physically

consummated any sort of sexual act with another human being, I suppose that such information might be of value. The only thing certain, however, is the eagerness of those who speculate. In discussing *The Last Puritan*, there is not even any need for superfluous speculation: Oliver Alden is virginal to the end of his life. That is part of his puritanism, as understood in the most vulgar and superficial sense. Something similar was part of Santayana's own nature, but for him it was an accidental emasculation (emotional, not literal) that resulted from causes within and without. That is what Bertrand Russell thought, and Santayana seemed to assent to it sadly when he told Cory that he supposed that his theory of essences seemed, to "Bertie," nothing but a "monk's dream." Or, as he wrote to Phelps,

> I have the Epicurean contentment, which was not far removed from asceticism; and besides I have a spiritual allegiance of my own that hardly requires faith, that is, only a humorous animal faith in nature and history, and no religious faith: and this common sense world suffices for *intellec*-

> *tual satisfaction*, partly in observing and understanding it, partly in dismissing it as, from the point of view of spirit, a transitory and local accident. (*Letters* 305)

There is no record of Santayana's having cohabited with anyone for sexual purposes. We would probably know about it had there been any such relationship. His earlier detractors hinted darkly at such possibilities; and some of his later admirers have speculated hopefully on the same possibilities (he is even anthologized in a collection of homosexual poetry). Surely, one or another of these would have brought out anything there was to know about any extended liaison. Brief affairs are much easier to conceal but would have been harder at that time to initiate, especially for someone like Santayana. Bath houses existedbut for the purpose of taking baths. If anything, he suffered from a morbid fear of intimacy, of the loss of self-definition that intimacy would involve, and enjoyed a keen awareness of the uniqueness of his own identity. Perhaps our own age overestimates the difficulty of celibacy; one would think that those who believe in anorexia and insomnia could also believe in celibacy. Santayana's own view of himself was that of a wandering scholar in the medieval sense, who might not have taken orders but whose life was monastic. There certainly were characteristics in Frank Russell that were most attractive to Santayana, but the reality of their relationship was much stranger, more complicated, more exotic, than what some would make it out to be.

Lord Jim's name is itself deliberately ambiguous. It was Peter Alden's invention and his way of dismissing, with an irony that Darnley tolerates as patiently as a pet dog might, various never-quite-clarified misdeeds. In another way, Jim is the thoughtless,

sensual, animal nature that is totally lacking in Dr. Alden. Jim opens up for Oliver possibilities for natural self-expression, animal high spirits, somewhat as Irma did. But, like Irma, there is something dangerous, something not quite right. With Peter Alden, Jim behaves more like a son than Oliver does and elicits from Peter a more patriarchal manner than Oliver has ever seen. Oliver cannot decide which is wrongthis easy familiarity on board the yacht or the chilliness and restraint back home; he begins to swim between two worlds, not certain which one he should belong to. Some of this "swimming" is literal: one of the first events in this new life at sea is an invitation to swim naked with Jim, while Dr. Alden drowses off in one of his narcotic stupors. Here we may recall Santayana's phrase for what Oliver lacked"animal Epicurean" ability to enjoy lifeand notice how the animal and the Epicurean are divided between, and carried to excess by, Jim and Dr. Alden. Jim's powerful swimming and curly hair make Oliver think of Byronand just here

we may recall Santayana's own fondness for healthy, athletic young men and his weakness for the Byronic form of romanticism, though he was severely critical of most other romanticisms.

In *My Host the World,* Santayana looked back at his relationship with Frank Russell:

> In the midst of his shabby adventures, which whatever he may have reaching towards brought him nothing but "expense of spirit in a waste of shame," this heroic spirit remained alive, as in all romantic prodigals; it was proud and brave enough not to be overwhelmed by any folly or any mischance. For this I admired him to the end, as I do Byron, not for what he did or thought, but for what he was. (64)

The accounts in *The Middle Span* (4647) of Russell's love of, and competence in the management of, machinery, especially nautical gear, lend further credence to the view that he was the original for Lord Jim, but as I have said, Santayana was thinking much more of a type than a person, and as with all his characters, he transmuted his originals.

He had always admired unashamed male physicality. At the time that he wrote *The Sense of Beauty*, he was even capable of putting in a qualified word for Whitman: "We may wish to dislike this power, but, I think, we must inwardly admire it" (112). His unqualified dismissal of Whitman later may signal his recognition that Whitman carried too farwhether consciously or notthe homosexual expression of his enthusiastic physicality. The description of the "Mussulmans" in *My Host the World* may not be a completely reliable view of the Moslem world, but Santayana certainly makes clear what he admires: "[T]hey were

openly warlike, openly sensual, proud, chivalrous, and capable of friendship. They were poetical and manly, bold and bravely resigned to the will of God. They didn't overestimate their own importance in the universe; but they despised a servile mind" (50). Is it unkind to remark, parenthetically, that this endorsement of the North African Moslems also reflects Santayana's tendency to argue that anyone who lived within spitting distance of the Mediterranean couldn't be all bad? Anyway, it certainly conveys his admiration for a confident, but not overweening, egoism.

In the novel, Oliver's problem is that he never encounters anyone, except Mario, whose carnality is not in some way tainted; and Mario is more of a companion than a model. The puritan distrust of the flesh is borne out in his experience, at first, and it is not until he nears the end of his short life that he begins to see how he has gone wrong. Santayana had planned the stages of Oliver's

enlightenment years in advance of completing the novel; in 1924 he wrote to Henry Ward Abbot:

> My hero (in the novel) whose name is Oliver (after Cromwell) Alden (after John Alden of the Mayflower and Longfellow's Poem, his supposed ancestor) is a *natural* Puritan, and it is not his sexual suppressions that make the thread of the story, at least not on the surface, but his general discovery that it is *wrong* not to live naturally, not to tell the truth about important things, as well as trifles, and not to make hay while the sun shines. But he is very much too fine in texture and feeling to be happy in his world, or to succeed in the things (including love-making) which it expects him to attempt: and so he peters outwhich is so terrible a quiet tragedy that I have actually cried over the writing of it! (*Letters* 207)

Along with Jim's animal heartiness goes animal cunning. We are often reminded of just how shrewdly he has taken the measure of Peter Alden and how determined he is to ingratiate himself with Oliver in the event that the son inherits everything, including the yacht. "Better [thinks Jim] that the old man should hold out a few years longer, until the boy got a thorough liking for the sea" (*Last Puritan* 165 [164]). Partly to forge a bond with Oliver, he soon tells him not only just how dependent Dr. Alden has become on his drugs but also (having glossed over his own "improprieties," one of which may have been an actual murder) lets fall a reference to the "incident" in which Peter accidentally killed the night watchman.

Jim's inner dialogueshis disingenuous assessments of Oliver's moods and attitudesmay represent one way in which Santayana managed to put something of himself into even this character; this reserving of judgment or opinion at times struck various

people as a form of supercilious detachment. Otherwise, Jim is, of course, the polar opposite of his author. When he pats Oliver on the back, the young man feels, though perhaps he should not, "There was something else more genuine, more honest. This was the first time anyone had caressed him since Fräulein twelve years before had stopped stroking his bare legs" (173 [172]). A physical intimacyor closeness, at any rateis developing; Jim, as it happens, has reached just the age at which Santayana himself felt that sudden rearrangement of commitments, that final cutting off of himself from normal human intimacy, his *metanoia*, or change of heart. It hardly need be said that Jim is very far from Santayana in this respect.

Peter Alden continues to act as an occasional spokesman for Santayana's own views; he shares the disillusionment of his author, but its effect on him is very different. One can, however, imagine Santayana hearing with approval:

> Oliver, I hope this winterhas Lord Jim told you?to revisit the Mediterranean. This boat was planned expressly with that idea. . . . Many of those towns were great and busy in antiquity, and the whole history of Christendom is inscribed in their walls. . . . You must let your mind be saturated with the genius of those places, with their ancient *numina*. (17879 [177])

Peter also voices Santayana's distaste for Whitman. Oliver agrees with his father on this: after Lord Jim presses *Leaves of Grass* on him, he thinks, "Walt Whitman seems inclined to slobber over everybody whether decent or not. Is that why Lord Jim likes him? I must ask him" (181 [180]).

For Jim, Whitman is poetic excellence personified:

> "But he's the great, the best, the only American poet," Jim burst out, "the only one true American. Do you mean you've never read him?" . . . There was a bookmark in the volume [Jim's], which opened of itself at a passage heavily scored in the margin. *I could turn and live with the animals, they are so placid . . . They do not weep for their sins. They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God.* (179180 [178179])

Early in the first voyage aboard his father's yacht, Oliver is taken ashore to visit his cousin Caleb Weatherbee. I will return to this episode as part of the consideration of the novel as a philosophical journey, since it makes much more sense in those terms. But if you consider Caleb as a realized character, you think of how Santayana must have from time to time encountered these native American eccentrics. What makes Caleb special is that he is a Catholic and, stranger still, that he is more peculiar, more eccentric, than most enthusiastic Protestants. The author allows Weatherbee to put in a good word for the Spanish

and to make reference to various friends and colleagues whom Santayana knew well at Harvard. But mainly, as well shall see, Caleb represents what has happened to Catholicism in America. He is the most heavily allegorical personality in the book.

Oliver, unable to see anything attractive in Caleb, retreats to the boat in the company of Jim. "At any rate, how reassuring to lean here against an honest unpretending comrade and feel the weight and firmness of that friendly body, like a wall of strength" (197 [195]). Once again, it is the divorce of mind and body, flesh and spirit, that is Oliver's inheritance. Repelled by Caleb's crabbed spirituality, he turns to the ambiguous physical warmth of Lord Jim. Even the books he comes across and his preferences in what he reads while his father stays on land at Caleb's show his revulsion from what he takes to be a corrupted spirit. The lockers in Peter's cabin are packed with Santayana's own favorite

booksthe ones in which, he felt, was to be found the most salubrious and delightful blend of body and soul, psyche and spirit: the *Arabian Nights*, Shakespeare, *Don Quixote*, Dr. Johnson, Fielding, Sterne, Swift, Dickens, Montaigne, Balzac, Taine. But Oliver can take no pleasure in them. Instead, he reads "old books of exploration and adventure, Captain Cook and Doughty and Livingstone and Sir Samuel Baker. The human element there was in close enough contact with nature not to seem silly, and there was at least a little geography and a little seafaring to ventilate the literature" (199 [197]).

Oliver, at his young age, is already suffering from a nostalgia for the physical, and yet his distrust of the spirit, his failure to see that it, too, arises from material circumstances, only intensifies his alienation from that material universe in which he yearns to live. The yearning carries him perilously close to what Santayana (whatever his own proclivities may have been) expects us to consider the wrong sort of attachment to Jim:

> Two young men alone in the wilds, sharing the same adventures, eating, working, sleeping in company, find life reduced to what both can share. Deeper or ulterior differences between them are submerged in this physical union; and this unison, especially when experienced for the first time, lends a marvelous excitement to the merest trifles, and makes the simplest confidences seem precious and rare. (207 [205])

Oliver begins unconsciously to ape Jim's mannerismssuch as way of sticking his hands in his pockets. He takes pleasure in being forced into contact with him in the midst of a football crowd, much as if he were Jim's date rather than his companion. He writes about Jim in his diary. He is jealous when he finds out

about Jim's common-law wife, though he expresses his jealousy in a tone of mild puritan reprobation: "But please don't ever take me with you again when you are going after women." Oliver isas Santayana was at that agecompletely innocent and ignorant as to the nature of what is blossoming into an actual romance. He sees nothing unnatural, for example, when: "Suddenly Jim took Oliver in his arms, with a great bear's hug, and positively kissed him. 'You're an absolute angel, and no mistake'" (266 [259]).

His naiveté turns out to be a saving grace in the end. At one point, when Jim invites him into his cabin for what he must have planned as be an erotic romp, Oliver (along with many of the original readers of *The Last Puritan*) is so perfectly innocent of such matters that nothing takes place. Indeed, whenever physical contact implies sexual consummation, Oliver is revolted. The heresy of his American puritanism has inverted his preferences, so that "Platonic" (in the

most commonplace, popular sense) love for a male seems preferable to sensual female congress. In the marvelous dream sequence that follows Oliver's accompanying Jim to visit his paramour, Mrs. Bowler, we see this.

> "Maybe you ain't used to women [she says, in his dream]. It's natural in a young gentleman of your years to be a bit shy, and I'm sure it's becoming. But it can't last for ever, can it now?" And with that she kissed him. But he liked her kiss even less than he had liked Jim's. It was a falser kiss, longer and nastier and harder to shake off. Jim at least had been spontaneous. (273 [266])

When, in actuality, Oliver kisses Jim's sister Rose, it is with a passion reminiscent of that which the Reverend Mr. Dodgson permitted himself to acknowledge for Alice Liddell. Rose does seem to represent ordinary human naturean ordinary pretty girland her appeal seems, to Oliver, "rather bovine in its placidity" (281 [272]). As it turns out, Oliver's New England upbringing cuts him off from her, as from all the other sources of his being, all normal connections with the world of nature.

Jim Darnley's father, the Vicar of Iffley, might be viewed as a stand-in for an aging Santayana. From the pulpit, the Vicar purveys a disillusioned Christianity, a belief purged of enthusiasm and subdued to a more-than-Christian resignation. He is memorable as a character but more important as a spokesman for Santayana's concept of the realm of truth and of the proper view of God; I will come back to him later.

All the episodes of the novel that are set in England are redolent of Santayana's affection for that country and its people and reflect the familiarity of several years' residence. Peter Alden's

description of Oxford in the summer sounds like something his author might say in his own person: "The place is full of foreigners and trippers and forlorn pedagogues, male and especially female, who assemble and meet together to peer into the darkness of each other's minds" (286 [277]). Santayana's thorough saturation in English manners and conversation shows itself in many ways. In addition to what he had read, he had listened to enough conversations between former public school boys, so that Mario's accounts of Eton brim with a wealth of detail. Also, there are casual references to people whom he actually knewLionel Johnson and Robert Bridgesthat add verisimilitude to English sequences. Oliver's approach to British architecture must have been that of Santayana, who wished to keep the English ways of doing things as distinct as possible from the German: "He began to distinguish styles and periods of architecturenot *kunst-historisch,* after

the manner of Fräulein Irma and Miss Letitia Lambbut by a human instinct, as one distinguishes people and things of a different moral quality" (311 [299301]). Santayana always hated the "art-history museum" approach to painting and sculpture as well, feeling that if art was not part of daily life, it was nothing.

Peter Alden, as before, speaks for the author on other subjects: "we in America are simpler; we have jettisoned three-quarters of the English ballast; we have kept little but the positivistic, commercial, colonizing strain which was dominant in our ancestors. But theyapart from a few Southernerswere drawn from an extreme party in England" (313 [302]). I will return to Peter's analysis when I consider the philosophical side of *The Last Puritan*, but here I would like to note yet once more how much of himself, at times, Santayana puts into Dr. Alden, who "would sit there by his well-shaded lamp in the pleasant interval between tea and dinner, reading some savoury old author and learning again to look at this poor world with humor and at passions without passion. The future, for him, held nothing urgent or alarming: he was not afraid of winter or of death" (321 [310]).

Scattered through the remainder of the novel are many other references, insights, character traits, odd pieces of information, attitudes, and preferences that will be familiar to anyone who has a sense of Santayana's personality, such as his fondness for a certain earthiness or physicality (in the Irish and the Italians, and in some English types). Oliver's inner reserve is always thereand, though a born American, he, like Santayana, feels homeless: "Shall I always have to run away from what surrounds me in

order to look for my true place? Must home for me always be in the distance?" (399 [384]). Santayana solved the problem by making himself at home in the absolute immediacy of undeniable subsistence, among the "friendly essences"; for Oliver, there was only increasing estrangement from all that had once been close and familiar.

Then there is the point of view of Mario, who "saw everything in comic relief against the background of his own foreign experience" (403 [387]), yet "behind this joyousness there appeared strange detachment; perhaps it was the detachment that made the joyousness possible" (402 [386]). Mario is himself a little *dépaysé*, what with his years at Eton and then his enrollment at Harvard. But fundamentally, he is more in touch with the world that brought him into existence than is Oliver. Back in America, when Oliver is attending Williams, Mario asks him if he had a wet nurse:

> Oliver laughed at the idea of a wet-nurse. Fancy Miss Tirkettle in that capacity! Nobody had a wet-nurse in America. Of course he was brought up on the bottle.

> "I thought so," Mario exclaimed triumphantly. "You don't know what a woman is. You are not comfortable with women. It's all because you never loved your mother and she never loved you. That makes all the difference. My mother suckled me at her own breast." (408 [392])

It is hardly necessary to labor the point that this recalls Santayana himself. Dante (Santayana's favorite poet) took as his image for divine consolation a nursing baby. Mario, we see again, represents that warm, Italian, Catholic psychethe person that Santayana just might have been, had his childhood begun as an Italian *bambino*.

Whenever student life is depicted in *The Last Puritan*, it is easy to Santayana drawing on his own experience, and it is always convincing. At one point, I, like Oliver after his entry into Harvard as a graduate student, found a delightful retreat in the largely unused recesses of the Divinity School library, and I can attest to the vividness with which, in a few words, Santayana captures the essence of that place. It is just at this point that he amuses himself by bringing himself into this own book. Oliver is trying to persuade Mario to sign up for one of the courses that he is already enrolled in:

> Who's the professor? [asks Mario]
>
> Santayana.
>
> Good Lord, I can see all I want of him outside. I'll take you to tea in his rooms. If you ask him what classes you'd better join in philosophy, as he can't very well say 'Join all mine and don't join any others,' he will tell you that it doesn't very much matter. (431 [412])

His ear for student banter was perfect, despite the lapse of several

decades since he had been there himself, and he is, of course, recapturing all this directly from his own life.

The conclusion of *The Last Puritan* makes an interesting contrast with what happens in *The Magic Mountain*. Mann's hero disappears into the battlefields of World War I, losing his identity in the mass of charging soldiers, vanishing into an indeterminate future, dismissed into the oblivion of history with the other millions of his contemporaries. Santayana wrote to Daniel Cory, after he had read a revision of the last part of his own book, "The war, as you suggest, was a great help, because it gave me a setting for the conclusion: but the theme and the tragic necessity were there from the beginning; so that the unity is not artificial or an afterthought" (Cory 147). In *The Magic Mountain*, the war is a necessary completion of the picture of European sickness and chaos. But in *The Last Puritan*, Oliver views war with the same detachment as he had American football games. He dies in an automobile accident after the armistice, so the war

itself is just a chance settinganother of many possible convulsions of the chaos where the realm of matter impinges violently upon, or emerges into, the realm of spirit. Although Santayana could see war, or certain wars, or certain dimensions of war, as adventures of the human spirit, Oliver's war is no more than an accidental set of circumstances; Santayana's detachment and disillusionment distance him and his hero from these events. Mann, for all his commitment to ironic artistry in fiction, gives us in *The Magic Mountain* a narrative deeply dyed with German Romanticisma quality that provoked Heinrich Mann's acerbic comment on his brother's "aesthetic" approach to war. To note this difference is not, of course, to imply the superiority of Santayana's novel, though it may be to recognize a depth of wisdom beyond that of Mann.

Oliver Alden's approach to the death prophesied by Mr. Denis Murphy stiffens the fabric of his personality, hardening to a tragic rigidity his divided allegiance, the rift of body and spirit. Death's approach also makes him take on a life of his owna life in which his author seems to have little part. In an extraordinary act of artistic self-sacrifice, of negative capability, Santayana sets Oliver free to achieve his own destiny on his own terms and allows us as readers, especially those of us who are American, to experience the pity and terror of contemplating a young man caught in our own spiritual predicament, who goes to his death with the predicament unresolved.

Up to that point, Santayana's procedure in this "memoir in the form of a novel" has been to dissolve his own character, personality, tastes, experienceeverything that went into his own

unique identity in the realm of truthand to redistribute these among various of the characters that populate his novel. There is no one character drawn completely from life, and there is no central figure that can be described as autobiographicalno Levin or Pierre, not even a failed or abandoned earlier self, such as Jude the Obscure may represent, no corrupted and destroyed future self. And yet the spirit of George Santayana permeates it; his personality is everywhere. It is *his* realm of spirit. But his crowning achievement is to have governed his realm so well as to allow at least one of its subjects the freedom to rise up and fulfill his own destiny, on his own terms.

9
Philosophy into Fiction

"'Puritanism is a natural reaction against nature,' " Santayana, appearing as a fictional character in the prologue of his own book, tells Mario Van der Weyer. *" 'I don't mean that puritanism has died out everywhere. There will always be people to take the thing up. But in Oliver puritanism worked itself out to its logical end. He convinced himself, on puritan grounds, that it was wrong to be a puritan.' "* (*Last Puritan* 6 [14])

As he so often does in *The Last Puritan*, Santayana simplified his terminology here in order to assure its appeal to the widest possible audience. What he has himself say might seem, to the casual reader, only a more sophisticated use of the word *puritan* than what some people now mean by *uptight*. Even in the America that reveres its Puritan forefathers, the word commonly conveys disapprobationand "a natural reaction against nature" suggests repression. Santayana had learned how to guide Americans, by using their own terminology, into a consideration of unfamiliar perspectives. For example, the subtitle of his first multivolume philosophical work, *The Life of Reason*, was *Phases of Human Progress*. Most Americans favor progress without giving much thought to what it implies; there was a secret agenda concealed in Santayana's usage. *Progress*, as it has been used since the French Revolution, was a word he detested. What he meant was *recurring instances* of progress toward the fulfillment of ideal possibilities; he did not mean an interminable process toward some ill-defined, far-off divine event (or

outcome). And he did not favor the sacrifice of individual personality, or individual identity, to procure some interminable and indeterminate advance, a sort of everlasting curriculum reform, finding this no more satisfying to the ideals of the human spirit than Spinoza's submission to the "grand march of the universe." Just as he used *progress* ironically, Santayana employs other words that carry a different meaning for him than for most of his readers; and most conspicuous among these are those in his novel's title*last* in the sense of *ultimate* (not as in *The Last of the Mohicans*); and *puritan* in the sense of a tendency in human nature to deny its own natural origins. For Santayana's own explanation of the title, one may turn to the unpublished letter to William Gross reproduced in the appendix of this book.

Oliver's puritanism sounds admirable, even in the mouth of the author: "[I]t was a deep and speculative thing: a hatred of all shams, scorn of all mummeries, a bitter merciless pleasure in the hard facts." This has the ring of heroic self-denial, of Christian self-sacrifice. "You and I are not puritans," Santayana, the character, tells Mario. "I don't prefer austerity for myself as against abundance, against intelligence, against the irony of ultimate truth." What is he saying? Is he implying that self-denial may not be the best or only road to moral perfection? If so, not even Mario catches his meaning, so used is he to the strictures that Christian teaching applies, even to Catholics. "*I always knew that you thought more of Oliver than me*" (7 [15]) Mario says, assuming that "Santayana" (the character) is speaking admiringly of Oliver's puritanismwhen in fact he is gently criticizing it.

This discussion of Oliver continues, with "Santayana" using other terms in which Americans are likely to conduct their discussions about religion. What passes for popular discussion of philosophical issues in the United States usually is some form of religious controversy. Many American Protestants view the Catholic Church as a purveyor of superstitious ritual, even of idolatry. "Santayana's" reply to Mario, who thinks that Oliver would have become a Catholic if he had lived long enough, subtly plays on this distrust that the author himself had been constantly aware of during his years of maturity in America. By putting the onus of superstition on Catholicism, he invites our (American, Protestant) assent to something that has a much broader application: his view that all religion is a work of the human imagination. In fact, and ironically, he means that what was wrong with Oliver was that he was *not* superstitious in a

good sense, that he lacked an imaginative tradition to attach himself to. But let us hear what he says; he replies to Mario that Oliver would never have left "*the monorail of sheer will for the old Roman road of tradition. . . . No: not a Catholic. His imagination wasn't lordly and firm enough to set up a second world over against this one, and positively believe in it*" (8 [15]). The second world that Oliver refuses to believe in sounds like what all right-thinking Protestant Americans would reject: a world of saints and relics, of ritual and ecclesiastical ornament. Oliver, then, is two full steps away from Santayana's own disillusioned rationality, having had the imaginative appreciation of a fully developed Catholic religion bred out of him, seeing in it nothing but superstition and error, much like Spenser's Knight of Holiness in *The Faerie Queene*.

This apparently casual conversation of "Santayana" with Mario, in familiar terms, actually implies a broad range of philosophical considerations: the relationship of Occam's razor to British empiricism; the romanticizing of Spinoza's

Deus sive natura into a sentimental pantheism; the transformation of Judeo-Christian ideas of salvation into the Calvinist doctrine of election and, ultimately, into the egotism of transcendental philosophy; the connections between philosophical idealism and empiricism. There are only a few places in *The Last Puritan* where the conversation between the characters verges on technical philosophy, and the author never overtly introduces philosophy into his narrative. Yet the novel is more permeated with philosophy than *The Divine Comedy*. Dante, after all, took his morals, metaphysics, and cosmology for granted, whereas Santayana is battling for his. Every character in the bookhowever lively, however well-realized as an imaginary person, carries a certain amount of philosophical baggage. Oliver Alden may not be Everyman, but he comes close to being the ideal all-American Protestant young man, and his story is something of a morality play. I now find it hard to believe that, at the age of seventeen, when I first read *The Last Puritan*, I enjoyed the story and the people in it as much as I did, quite unaware of its serving as a vehicle for many of Santayana's ideas; it now seems almost overburdened in that respect.

The Confusion of the Aldens

Having established a framework with his prologue, Santayana moves into the story proper. Part 1"Ancestry"comes close to pure caricature of the Boston of Santayana's own childhood and youth. Mr. Nathaniel Alden observes that "A good citizen must follow the movement of public affairs, so as to cast his vote intelligently, and know whether the party in power deserved his support. If business was good, it did: if business was bad, it

didn't" (16 [22]). He says of church, "The music was classical and soothing, the service High Church Unitarian, with nothing in it either to discourage a believer or annoy an unbeliever. What did doctrines matter? The lessons were chosen for their magical archaic English" (19 [24]). He does not neglect culture: "It was a public duty, he declared, for those who could afford it to encourage art in a new country" (20 [25]). The important thing is the effect that all this has on the future Oliver's father, Peter Alden, who is Nathaniel's half brother and his legal ward. Peter is an ordinary boy. He does not give much thought to anything, he wants to have a good time, he learns to enjoy hanging around with what Nathaniel considers lowlife, and he enjoys a normal and normally increasing sensuality. In the chapter "Spirituality and Its Corruptions" in *Reason in Religion*, Santayana anticipated by many years the type of personone kind of *prerational* personalitythat he would later embody in Peter:

> Worldliness is arrest and absorption in the instrumentalities of life; but instrumentalities cannot exist without ultimate purposes, and it suffices to life the eyes to those purposes and to question the will sincerely about its preferences, to institute a catalogue of rational goods, by pursuing which we can escape worldliness. Sense itself is one of these goods. The sensualist at least is not worldly, and though his nature be atrophied in all its higher part, there is not lacking, as we have seen, a certain internal and abstract spirituality in his experience. He is a sort of sprightly and incidental mystic, treating his varied succession of little worlds as the mystic does his monotonous universe. (20910)

This sounds much like the young Peter. Santayana goes on to argue that the future can hold much promise for the sensualist, if he disciplines his inclinations in the service of some art or science and learns to delight himself with that.

But Nathaniel Alden cannot see the possibilities in Peter; he sees only evil and disorder. He actually succeeds in teaching Peter to disbelieve the doctrines of the church on immortality by arguing the unimportance of physical death; as a consequence, Peter comes to reflect: "Perhaps immortality in any case was only a figure of speech. What a relief! It would be so awkward in heaven, after all one had discovered, to have to put on a perfect innocence" (*Last Puritan* 22 [28]). The effect on this young man, who lacks his future son's conscientiousness, is to help along a rapid transition fromto use Santayana's categoriesprerational animal spirits to postrational Epicureanism. Nathaniel is an unwitting purveyor of Epicurean atomism to his half brother, accidentally encouraging in him a cynical tendency toward self-indulgent agnosticism.

Official sources of theological information are no more help. "Mr. Hart," whose name is probably a leftover from a very early plan for *The Last Puritan*, the heavy-handed allegory of which Santayana did well to abandon, is the Unitarian minister. His interior ruminations are even more comforting than his actual preaching; he finds bland excuses for every sort of mild-mannered heresy. Surely Santayana wants us to think of William James when we overhear him thinking: "Why shouldn't each man form his conception of God and of heavenif he needed such conceptions at allaccording to the promptings of his own breast?" (3738). In this one fragment of his interior monologue, Mr. Hart has epitomized American intellectual history from Jonathan Edwards to *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The consequence for Peter is, of course, that he gets no guidance whatevermerely toleration for whatever direction, theologically, he may wish to take.

Nathaniel's piety consists in part of unquestioning submission to the will of God, and when Peter begins to follow courses that he deems inadvisable,

Nathaniel's main concern is to make a display of his own righteousness rather than to interfere with what God is making of Peter. The right thing is to turn Peter over to a person deemed to be a good influence, however; so Nathaniel ships him out West to a camp for wayward youth, whose proprietor, Dr. Hand (more playful allegory, of courseone of Peter's "trustees"), allows himself much latitude in theological matters:

> "As to religion," Dr. Hand interposed, "it seems that instead of converting the Indians to Christianity he was himself converted by them to Buddhism or Yoga or some other creed which I understand is very hygienic. He is a vegetarian in the tropics, but approves of beef for a cold climate." (37 [42])

Santayanato judge from his acute awareness of American eccentricities in religionwould have been one of the least surprised of his contemporaries to learn of the proliferation of hippie communes, especially in the western states, in the America of the 1960s and 1970s. A century ago, the idea of a utopian community seemed to most people to pose no special threat, provided that the person who ran it, whatever odd things he or she might believe, was "a thorough modern, full of the spirit of democracy, optimism, and service" (37 [42]). It was, once again, a case of clean living triumphing over the disorder implied in theological irregularity.

The net effect of Peter's upbringing is to prepare himafter a few pleasant years in which he is held in check by the conventions of his prep school and of Harvard Collegefor a life of skeptical self-indulgence, of Epicureanism in the worst sense, of demoralized postrational wandering in body and mind. He becomes a type of

late-empire Roman, full of disillusionment, feeling no loyalty to any place and to few persons, and untouched by the message of Christian salvation. The progress of his apostate mentality is reflected in the names he assigns his successive yachts. *The Old Junk* has a pleasant flavor of postadolescent flippancy, of affectionate and self-deprecatory abuse, with the hint of the exotica recollection of his adventures in the Orient. Next comes the *Hesperus*, the setting star of classical antiquity, suggesting a distant view of Elysium or the Happy Isles. Finally, there is the macabre suggestiveness in the name of *The Black Swan*, the ship of death, the bird of beauty transformed into a hearse-like emblem, as morbid as the lurid red Dove of Death, bearing its poppy blossom, in Rossetti's painting *Beata Beatrix*.

Fundamental to Santayana's moral views, of course, was his reading of Spinoza, and in his attempt to communicate (not very convincingly) what

Oliver Alden's infant years were like, he makes use of a comic version of Spinozan ethics.

> And life, at least physical life, in the model infant responded perfectly to each appointed stimulus. . . . It consisted of learning the places of goods and evils, and the way they followed one another. That wagging of arms and legs, together with the habit of staring and following the light with his eyes, proved to be very useful for this ethical purpose. Goods and evils turned out to be arranged in a circle or sphere, in what his nurse called his skin, or under this, in what she called his tummy. (7677 [80])

The facetiousness may mislead us as to just how serious Santayana was, for whom moral distinctions made sense only in terms of the organism (or *psyche*) that was making the distinctionsonly in relation to a judging center of consciousness:

> Living, real, and self-justified was only his own will, the inner spring of his being, the centre and judge of all that unaccountably went on. The world might sometimes seem obsequious and willing to be commanded: but presently it became tiresome, did what it shouldn't do, and showed itself to be cruelly alien, besetting, and unavoidable. (77 [81])

In his infancy, Oliver is already strongly disposed to go over the line of healthy egoismto assert too vigorously his dominion over the world that he occupies. Or perhaps it is normal aggressiveness that needs tempering with rationality. In any case, "when he was hurt at all, he was deeply injured, because his feelings were hurt also. He *ought* not to have been hurt: why, then was he?" (78 [81]). Deep within himself, Oliver refuses to learn wisdom: "[T]hough almost everything might be wrong, the inner oracle that condemned and rejected was sure of being itself

right, and was not in the least dismayed" (78 [82]). So, where the infant was a sound philosopher (not in the sentimental Wordsworthian sense but as a rational materialist) the child is already a transcendentalist. Santayana delivers all this with a light touch, but the point is that, at the age of three or four, Oliver is already beginning to assimilate a sense of election and a conviction of the rightness of his views against all others. His mother, we are told, believes in democracy, but in a democracy of the "elect."

The categorical imperative of duty Oliver learns from Fräulein Irma. On their walks, what matters is to accomplish the goal stated in advance, in the amount of time allowed and without stopping to take care of inconveniences such as pebbles in one's shoes. One must decide what to take pleasure in and

then do so: "[I]f Fräulein, gasping with intentional enjoyment, said they *must* get to the top of the hill, the view would be so *wunderschön*, the hill must be stoically climbed" (93 [97]). Oliver teaches himself the duty of not complaining, not minding the pain from the pebble ("the young philosopher was educating himself in essentials").

The ambivalent presentation of Irma reflects the mixed feelings that Santayana entertained about Germans and German philosophy. When Irma is writing home, she speaks of the old Germany that still survived, in spite of Luther, "where everything is well-ordered and healthy and beautiful, and even festive at certain seasons, in the old human pagan and Christian way" (109 [112]). She goes on to compare what she finds in American unfavorably with this. But Irma also represents the new Germany, where ordinary people are beginning to be touched by the corruption of philosophical idealism. As Santayana traced it in *Egotism in German Philosophy*, it has evolved from Luther's rebellious piety to Nietzschean madness; here is the way it shows itself in Irma:

> I am going to say something dreadful, dearest sister [Irma writes], but I feel it, and though it be blasphemy one should always say what one feels. I can no longer cry with Goethe, *Verweile doch*. No: such loitering is unworthy of the German spirit! We must not cling to anything achieved, but stretch out our eager hands for ever to the Beyond. And I won't say, towards "Something Higher." I won't climb up any ladder set up for me beforehand, with rungs all numbered higher and higher, like degrees in a thermometer! What is that but a remnant of mediaeval metaphysics? The free, bold, pure German genius cannot be confined to such a single narrow path. It will forge its way out of Itself in any direction, in all directions, into the

> infinite, scorning all law save that which It imposes on Itself at each moment by living, molested by no facts, recognising no conditions, but creating always the next step by Its untrammeled sudden inspiration. Nature is a prison. As for me, give me Chaos! (111 [114])

If only Neville Chamberlain had listened to Irma! Writing earlier, in the midst of World War I, Santayana had traced the problem back to Luther and then forward to Kant, concluding chapter 5 of *Egotism in German Philosophy* as follows:

> Thus it is from Kant, directly or indirectly, that the German egotists draw the conviction which is their most tragic error. Their self-assertion and ambition are ancient follies of the human race; but they think these vulgar passions the creative spirit of the universe. Kant, or that soul within Kant

> which was still somewhat cramped in its expression, was the prophet and even the founder of the new German religion. (51)

So for Santayana, Irma is the soul of Germanygood, kind, generous in spirit, but corrupted by a false philosophy; so corrupted that she can't even read Goethe with sufficient perception to realize that Faust never did mean *Verweile doch* and only used the phrase as an option to be rejected. The conclusion of *Faust* depends on Mephistopheles's misunderstanding of the context in which faust uses those words, and it is therefore doubly ironic that Irma mistakes them for Goethe's own.

Oliver has other teachers. One of these is nature itselfand again, we must be careful not to imagine a Wordsworthian nature into which are projected the beautiful and the sublime, the nurturing and the terrible, of the eighteenth-century aesthetic categories. Nor is it merely nature red in tooth and claw of an outraged romantic innocence. It is just nature. It is the *Deus sive natura* of Spinoza, the realm of matter of Santayana.

> His true counselors spoke to him without words. They were the woods through which he rode alone, letting his horse pick his way through the unkempt scrubby undergrowth, and amusing himself by dodging or whipping aside the twigs. Not one tree lived for others: not one insect, not one crawling thing, questioned its native impulse to thrive. Was not the only good anyone could do in this world simply to keep himself as undefiled and determined and complete as possible, and let others too live as they liked? . . . He could succour; but he couldn't abet or instigate all this swarming blindness of existence. (*Last Puritan* 119 [121])

But as Oliver emerges from the woods, his egoism begins to overstep its proper limits; as his pony feels the freedom of the

road opened up by human beings, he feels "How pleasant and how various were the allies which a truly clear and masterful will could find in the world, and marshal against one's inevitable enemies" (119 [122]). Very JamesianWilliam, not Henrythis drama of the struggle!

Jamesian tooand reminiscent of the very words that Santayana used for his mentoris the picture of Cyrus Paul Whittle, the teacher in Oliver's high school. Whittle himself is a grotesquely exaggerated blend of C. A. Strong (Santayana's life-long friend who engaged him in interminable epistemological disputes) and John Dewey, as well as James, carrying to an absurd extreme some of the presuppositions behind their thinking. He also illustrates the danger that American philosophy ran in submitting itself to German transcendentalism.

> Not that Mr. Cyrus P. Whittle was without enthusiasm and a secret religious zeal. Not only was America the biggest thing on earth, but it was soon going to wipe out everything else: and in the delirious dazzling joy of that consummation, he forgot to ask what would happen afterwards. He gloried in the momentum of sheer process, in the mounting wave of events; but minds and their purposes were only the foam of the breaking crest; and he took an ironical pleasure in showing how all that happened, and was credited to the efforts of great and good men, really happened against their will and expectation. . . . These sentiments sank imperceptibly into Oliver's mind, without awakening his attention; they were not incongruous with his own temperament. (126 [129])

Oliver is hovering on the edge of a rational acceptance of the material universe, a sane naturalism; but something always carries him away from it. Santayana reports that his own youthful enthusiasm for Schopenhauer was tempered by a respect for matter that he had learned from Hobbes, Spinoza, and the early William Jamesso that for him, the "Will" became a mythological name for matter itself in its blind and irrational flux (*Persons and Places* 24849). Oliver lacks this sound preparation and is readily seduced by philosophical idealism. Here, Irma is talking to Mrs. Alden:

> I was reading Schopenhauer to him yesterdayyou know Schopenhauer is a most wonderful idealist and lovely writer, only, alas, a confirmed pessimist and horrid about womenbut of course in reading to Oliver I skip all those wicked Mephisto passages, which I have marked beforehand with a cross. Well, when I read how everything becomes beautiful and as it were enchanted when we suspend our will and see the whole world merely as an Idea, Oliver stopped me, made me reread that paragraph, and wouldn't let me go

> until he had repeated it himself three times in the eloquent German, and knew it perfectly by heart. (*Last Puritan* 13233 [134])

We should recall that Santayana wanted to do his doctoral dissertation on Schopenhauer but was prevented from doing so by Josiah Royce; like Harriet Alden's brother, he ended by focusing on Lotze. But in his novel, he can allow Oliver to fall under the spell of Schopenhauer.

Fräulein Irmathere are numerous instances in her conversation and lettersshows us how a warm-hearted Germanic enthusiasm is misdirected by German philosophy toward a vacuous idealism, instead of being assimilated through a living institution (for Santayana, the Catholic Church) to the needs of living creatures. Her effect on Oliver is to provide a treacherous authority for the schism of mind and body that is already well established in him.

Oliver's transcendentalism sometimes takes the romantic form of a revulsion from city life:

> Cities, for Oliver, were not a part of nature. He could hardly feel, he could hardly admit even when it was pointed out to him, that cities are a second body for the human mind, more rational, permanent and decorative than the animal organism of flesh and bone: a work of natural yet moral art, where the soul sets up all her trophies of action and instruments of pleasure. (140 [141])

Part of the trouble is the nature of American citiesthe absence in the United States of a civilized concept of the city, the city still being felt as something wrested from a wilderness, provisional and transient, and fundamentally unnatural. Perhaps Santayana would not be surprised at the New York City of the 1990s. The Boston that Santayana grew up was pretty raw in comparison with London, Rome, or Parisand this is all that his character Oliver knows of the possibilities of urban life.

Considering how central it is to his philosophy, it is remarkable that Santayana's concept of essence never figures in *The Last Puritan*. This is part of what is missing in Oliver, as well as all the rest of the charactersa failure, an inability to focus attention on what is immediately at hand, as well as eternally subsistent. The Vicar of Iffley almost achieved the contemplative life necessary for the intuition of essence, but he is mainly occupied with effecting a transformation of Christianity, one that would be suitable for him alone. DistractionSantayana's synonym for *evil*affects all the other characters to a much greater degree. The whole action of the novel is an argument against immersion in the partial and transitory goals that take up most of our lives.

Only the reader can see the lives of the characters therein, as they could not begin to see themselves, under the Spinozan aspect of eternity.

There are many evocations of the realm of matter in the novelappropriately so, since for Santayana matter was the actualizing force behind all existing things. *The Black Swan*, at anchor in Provincetown, is peaceful enough. But, he reminds us:

> Nothing is more treacherous than the peace of nature, when we fancy that the mountains were compacted to endure and to sleep for ever. Such material peace is a surface phenomenon, a mask for internal and incessant war. Matter is full of hidden springs and unexpressed affinities; some furtive influence here, some secret impulse there, will presently set in motion an insidious drift, destined to disrupt that equilibrium. A curious evolution will follow, or a sudden explosion. (151 [151])

On board *The Black Swan*, Oliver seems suspended between Jim Darnley and Peter Aldenthe prerational and postrationallike a character in a morality play. The right solution would be rationality itselfa harmonious orchestration of conflicting impulses and ideals, in Santayana's terms. But Oliver lacks a rational tradition to which to attach himself; the puritanism in which he has been raised is intrinsically self-defeating, self-obliterating. One small example of this occurs when he tries champagne for the first time: he finds that he cannot enjoy it as an exciting intensification of animal spirits, nor as an escape, as a drug to dull his discomforts: "All this luxurious living of his father's and Lord Jim's, all this loitering and sipping of mere sensations was a weary business, and rather wicked" (160 [160]). It is not long before he becomes aware that Dr. Alden's condition is far worse than thisthat Peter uses drugs to bring on "a wretched parody of Nirvana, produced by black arts and destined to be ephemeral" (170 [170]). The language of Oliver's thoughts betrays Santayana's own contempt for shortcuts to mystical solutions. Santayana believed that some varieties of Indian thought (the real nirvana, not the parody) were superior to anything in the West. But he felt that these were beyond him.

Oliver is going in a direction already marked out by Emersonrestrained by clean living but indulging in an irresponsible mysticism, a commitment to an unearned transcendental freedoma confidence in the rightness of one's own impulses and an enthusiastic identification of one's own predilections with those of the universe at large. "What he asked of things was that they should produce a happy unconsciousness of all instrumentalities, and set the mind free for its own flights"

(159 [15960]). And Santayana later refers to him as "our budding transcendentalist." But at least Oliver is free of the worstthe Germanvariety of that philosophy:

> Yes, a lovely summer night: stars, harbour lights reflected in the sea, and the single calculated flash of the revolving lighthouse more significant, Oliver reflected, than all those natural marvels, with its witness to the determination of civilised man to live as little dangerously as possible. What a fool, after all, that Nietzsche was. Poetry and philosophy and sermons purposely went off at a tangent, purposely lied, in order to make an impression. The simple truth. What a liberation, what a relief! (165 [165])

Here, in fact, Oliver is almost rational, almost at peace with the realm of matter. Unfortunately, this turning to matter for reassurance is mostly a way of coping with the horror at having learned the truth about his father. Oliver is more like Emerson's transparent eyeball, merging himself into surrounding nature, than like those Ionic philosophers so much admired by Santayana, who submitted

themselves to the power of nature without any egotistical sense of assuming nature to themselves. Also, Oliver's return to the comforting presence of nature has something retrogressive to it, in that he has turned back from the possibility of imaginative reconstruction of human experience through religion and art.

His new-found materialism is almost Marxist in its rejection of religion. "The vast breadth, the tireless monotony of nature were also soothing and liberating; they too were enlightening; and they were a saner influence than human religion under which to lie down and sleep, because they didn't substitute one dream for another. They were not drugs" (173 [172]). Oliver, in his revulsion at his father's drugged state, is equating the "myths" of religion with the material derangement of the senses. Peter represents the worst possibilities of postrational human nature, and Oliver cannot distinguish this decadent Epicureanism from the imaginative vigor of a living and long-established religion. Oliver's confusion and horror are (for Santayana) analogous to the uncomprehending revulsion of the Protestant at the opulence of the later Catholic Church. Oliver exhibits (in a much-moderated fashion) the Protestant iconoclasm that, whipped into fanaticism, stripped the music, the vestments, the crucifixes, and much of the stained glass and statuary from the churches of northern Europeand, even more important for Santayana, broke away from the living traditions of the Catholic Church. Or rather, having been deprived of a nurturing institution as he had been of physical mothering, Oliver has nothing to turn to besides inhuman matter itself for a comforting presence. He reverts to a prerational statemuch as he turns to Lord Jim for close companionship.

Oliver's only exposure to Catholicism in America, when he visits his cousin Caleb, takes a form that is guaranteed to alienate him from it. As Santayana said in a letter to Daniel Cory: "The Salem episode is put in as an important part of Oliver's education: it gives him a certain *awareness* of the Catholic and anti-Goethian point of view which he otherwise might never have had. It completes his isolation that he cannot accept that point of view, any more than any other that is positive" (Cory 14445). "Who, then, was Cousin Caleb Weatherbee?" wonders Oliver, and his father tells him, "He is a hunchback, a cripple, an enthusiast who has gone over to Rome and built a Benedictine Monastery at Salem in his old family orchard" (*Last Puritan* 183 [182]). For anyone attuned to Santayana's views of America, this description is an immediate giveaway, that Caleb is a living allegory of the fate of Catholicism in America where, according to him, it simply has not taken hold. Catholicism as transplanted to America has been stunted by an environment essentially alien to it. Willard Sperry, in *Religion in America*, which he wrote to help explain America to England in the midst of World War II, referred to the "American restatement" of Catholicism.

Sperry also remarked how "a thin veneer of seventeenth-century English Puritanism has been laid over the most diverse religious tradition" and added that "when an ecumenical religious conference is convened, American delegates from many local denominations find that, despite their differences, they are strangely nearer to one another than they are to the communions with which, by origin, they are severally identified in the Old World" (5).

Cousin Caleb is more like Jonathan Edwards than he is like, say, Jacques Maritain: "He has soaring metaphysical views, a mystical enthusiasm which he manages to combine with his ardent Americanismbecause he is an ardent patriot in his odd prophetic way" (*Last Puritan* 184 [183]). Rather than grafting himself onto the old stem of Roman Catholic accommodativeness, of civilized and urbane tradition (as Santayana saw it), Caleb has revived for himself a Hebraic fanaticism that outdoes the puritans: "God will take his own time. But we are not a people abandoned by God, at least not yet: we are his chosen people, though still under the Old Dispensation."

Dr. Alden tries to use Caleb as an example for Oliver to learn from:

> "I am glad," said Peter to his son, "that you are hearing your cousin Caleb unbosoming himself. You may not understand or accept his views, but at least you will learn not to believe the Germans when they tell you that there is only one living or respectable philosophy in the world at a time. The next generation may very likely turn its back on what we call progress, and revert to some settled tradition, either that which your cousin Caleb follows, or some other." (18889 [187])

All that this accomplishes is to convince Oliver that this is the (unacceptable) Catholic alternative; he makes his escape as soon as he canback to the yacht with Lord Jim. Before he can get away, he has to listen to Caleb tout Catholic dogma with all the self-assurance of a rabid fundamentalist: "But there is one and only one thorough, consistent, realistic, encyclopaedic expression of faith in the human heart. It is Catholic dogma" (190 [188]).

Through Caleb, Santayana also delivers a frank denunciation of Goethe that he could never have permitted himself, steeped as the Harvard of his youth had been in admiration for the German bard: "Could a mind be fundamentally more vulgar? Worse than Walt Whitman slapping his hairy breast in Brooklyn and saying, 'What a good man am I!'" (192 [191]). So Oliver, though entertained with some of this, quits the company of yet one more postrational personality for that of the prerational, Whitman-loving, Jim Darnley.

It may falsity, or at least encumber, the reading of the novel to force this much philosophical and cultural baggage on young Oliver Alden; it does not

seem to me, though, that Santayana really liberates his character from these constraints until we reach the closing chapters. All Oliver's yearnings and preferences seem to carry some such significanceand he is a most serious youth, potentially more conscious of these implications than his contemporaries. Back in school and thinking about college, he feels the pull of the ocean, of the company of Lord Jim. This is his nostalgia for the lost physical universe, for matter itself, and not a transcendental urge to assert his dominance over things, not a desire to impose his own spirit on the universe. He is in fact contemptuous of such impulses:

> That vital air outside, that freedom, that simpleness, that natural lighthow much more romantic they were than any moral melodrama invented by the frightened dreams of mankind! That was why some people thought so much of Goethe and others of Walt Whitman; these poets seemed to liberate them from moral cramp; but pedantry and preaching and yawping were unnecessary for that purpose. It was enough to go to sea. (227 [223])

There are moments in *The Last Puritan*, such as this, when one wonders if Santayana forgot to be as careful as he should have been about the dramatic propriety of Oliver's utterances. Too often he really does sound like the author himself.

Peter Alden, for his part, instinctively hates the evangelistic spirit and would have approved Robert Frost's couplet, "I own I never really warmed / To the reformer or the reformed." More than ever, Peter represents Santayanafor example, when we read:

> Peter was an incorrigible Epicurean in his judgments though rather a troubled one in his heart; and nothing seemed to him more odious in

> this world than people bent on reforming it. The truly sweet fruits of existence were to be picked by the way: they were amusement, kindness, and beauty. But reformers blindly pursued something else, which if realised would probably be worthless; and meantime they screamed with the fanatical hatred of everything human. (244 [238])

Although it is more sentiment than philosophy, one might also point to how exactly Dr. Alden's feelings about England mirror those of Santayana when he considered where to settle: "The acceptance he might find in England, no matter how simple and hearty, must always remain incidental; no radical bond held him to anything there" (245 [239]).

But this is only one side of Santayana; in the sermons and conversation of the Reverend Mr. Darnley, Vicar of Iffley and father of Jim, we hear what I take to be Santayana's own disillusioned form of Christianitynot really his own, but what he thought it ought to be in order to continue as a religion. First, there is the problem, ever since the end of the Middle Ages, of the refusal of believing Christians of all denominations to accept the possibility that there can be various kinds of truth that may conflict with religious dogma, including those truths formulated in terms of mathematics and the laws of natural science. Or, if they accept such truths, Christians may try in strange ways to accommodate them to some dogma or prejudice, arguing, for example, that Jesus was an unusually clever electrochemist who could transmute hydrogen and oxygen into carbon and reconnect the results so as to produce alcohol. The Vicar preaches acceptance of natural science on its own terms:

> And the Truth of natural fact also, the Truth of science, what a stumbling block it is. How anxiously, how insecurely, the Church strives to protect the treasure of her faith from that merciless flood. Yet all Truth is an angel of the Lord, even a part of divine being: for Saint Augustine tells us that God is not merely good, but is goodness itself, not true but the Truth. (250 [243])

What he favors sounds like a gently expressed Spinozism, and it accords perfectly with Santayana's recurring insistence that we relearn the piety of the Ionic philosophers, of (as he sees it) the Moslems, of any faith or cult which humbly acknowledges that something beyond ourselves created us. We are to abandon a Hebraic sense of election, a Protestant conviction of our inner

illumination, and submit ourselves to learn from nature and from one another what the truth really is.

> Presume not to dictate to God what God shall be, or what He shall do. Run forth to Him as a child to his father, mould your wishes to His eternal decrees, accept the place and nature He has assigned to you, and your ignominy will be your glory and even in the midst of this earthly life and its wretchedness you will be living among His angels. (250 [243])

What Santayana makes the Vicar say about the architecture of his church may be more amusing to American Protestants than Santayana meant it to be. The Vicar calls it "earnest, honest work" and says that it "went back to the Romans." The structure is so filled with early Catholic spirit that "we may still join those incomprehensible barbarians in their faith and prayer, when all else in their

lives is grown obsolete and terrible" (253 [246]). Translated, this means that England's real redeeming feature is that it once was a Catholic country. This makes it better than it would be otherwise. One would like to know what Santayana thought of Russian Orthodox religion. Did he feel that it had in it a Mongol savagery? Often he does seem to forget that fanaticism and barbaric behavior are possible anywherenot just in northern Europe, that, for example, some of the crusades were preached in Italy. I suspect, however, that he would come back with some clarification to the effect that he was merely identifying the possibilities inherent in human nature and not stigmatizing any people or geographical area.

But to return to the Reverend Mr. Darnley: like his author, he is at times somewhat Aristotelian: "Of course all men, even animals and plants, have souls" (254 [247]). One hears in this Santayana's special use of the word *psyche*, which I have discussed in chapter 5. He goes on to speculate that his son may be endowed only with an animal soul, a thought that fits well with the idea of Jim as prerational human nature.

Oliver does not really understand any of the Vicar's preaching; instead, he misappropriates his words as many an American might, finding in them his warrant for a vague Emersonian affirmativeness, the self-forgiveness of those who see themselves as part of the oversoul: "We should love and forgive everybody as we love and forgive ourselves." In some ways this is only a hair's breadth away from what Santayana held to, but the important difference is that Santayana could not countenance the extinction of individual identity that pantheism implies. And he

therefore judges Oliver with an unusual, though humorously kind, frankness: "Thus our young moralist tried to soothe his wounded conscience with the balm of pantheism, and to gild the shady side of human life in the sunshine of nature" (286 [277]). Oliver is disturbed by things he has learned about Jim and is unwilling to allow Jim to damage himself in histhat is, Oliver'sopinion. So he entertains an Emersonian pantheism partly in order to excuse Jim's "shady side."

Other shrewd analysts of American thought have independently traced the same patterns that Santayana exhibits concretely in Oliver. One thinks of Yvor Winter's dissections of Emerson, Whitman, and Hart Crane, and of Perry Miller's work, especially the essay, "From Edwards to Emerson." It is nonetheless absorbing to watch the progress of the disease in the young Alden. He is full of the animal vigor, the emotional volatility, the yearning for passionate commitment, of any healthy eighteen-year-old. But he has no tradition of comparable vitality to wed himself to. His puritan upbringing requires that he wrestle the natural man into submission; later, the Unitarian sermons that he listens

to assume that the problem of subduing the natural man simply does not exist. So the passionate inward impulse toward self-assertion, worship, celebration even, reemerges in Oliver as it did in the prose of Emerson and the poetry of Whitman, as an incipient egotism unsanctioned and unchastened by any body of traditional belief.

> Nature has canalised a part of her freedomif we may call it freedominto your particular organism; and so long as health prevailsa very determinate and specific healthyour free soul dances and your empty mind expands to embrace infinity.
>
> But by an entanglement in thought, and by a hereditary prejudice, young Oliver's sympathies were perturbed. He demanded some absolute and special sanction for his natural preferences: as if any other sanction were needed for love, or were possible, except love itself. Love, without that impossible absolute rightness, seemed to him a bewitchment. All life, unless you share it, is a bewitchment. (320 [308])

Oliver's "demand" carries us back into a consideration of Santayana's moral philosophy; this may be summed up in the oxymoronic-seeming expression, "absolute relativism." With Spinoza, he held that our categories of good and bad represent "personal equations"an assertion that may well strike the ears of most who consider themselves righteous and upstanding Christians or Jews as a vicious doctrine reminiscent of Machiavelli. At the same time, those who deny that there is such a thing as a "moral value" will not be placated, because Santayana's intention was to assert that there were indeed goods and evils, moral and immoral actions, but that no value attached to them apart from the interests and preferences of a center of

consciousness, or at least a center of existence. From that point of view, the goods and evils were absolute. The good of that center includes being aware that there are other centers, with their own interests. Santayana would simply have us extend what we understand as Christian charity not only to Moslems, Buddhists, and Hindus; and not only to dogs, cats, and elephants; but possibly to electrons, quasars, and beyond. At the same time, he tempers the demands of self-sacrifice, since he allows for rational self-assertion and the delight of personal identity. Such a moral philosophy is simultaneously more merciful and more merciless than most common attitudes. It is not easy to apply in a practical way; it does not come with a code of laws that one person or one group has set down. It requires continual alertness and continual reflection. It requires uncommon honesty and uncommon resignation.

Oliver can learn little from his father and from Jim, because they do not set an example of such a morality; indeed, both are profoundly amoral, in com-

pletely different ways. Jim has the alert animal nature of prerational man, but he is not very reflective and not very honest. Peter is uncommonly resigned and reflective, but he deliberately dulls his own awareness and despairs of making sense out of his experience. Neither one makes much effort to enter imaginatively into another point of viewindeed, on his own, Oliver is much more flexible in this way. But the doctrine in which he has been raised defeats him.

The Heresy of Special Election

If there was one thing against which Santayana waged a life-long battle, it was Oliver's desire for the "absolute and special sanction for . . . natural preferences." This was a side of American charactera barbaric northern European neo-Hebraism, according to Santayanathat had continually irritated what William James unflatteringly called his "moribund Latinity." As early as *The Sense of Beauty*, we see his rejection of moral exceptionalism articulated in a form quite unfamiliar to most Americans, myself included. It was based on a Spinozistic naturalism that limits itself mostly to questions of aesthetics and that now seems a quiet and mature expression of his settled outlook:

> When we try to make our judgments absolute, what we do is to surrender our natural standards and categories, and slip into another genus, until we lose ourselves in the satisfying vagueness of mere being.
>
> Relativity to our partial nature is therefore essential to all our definite thoughts, judgments, and feelings. (128)

He came back to this in *Reason in Religion*:

> This illusion is that they and their chosen interests alone are important or have a legitimate place in the moral world. . . . Spiritual men, in a word, may fall into the aristocrat's fallacy; they may forget the infinite and vulgar life which remains quite disjointed, impulsive, and short-winded, but which nevertheless palpitates with joys and sorrows, and makes after all the bulk of moral values in this democratic world. (21415)

Is not this exactly what is wrong with Oliver, the "spiritual man" par excellence? His nurture, culture, education, and religion have taught him to consider himself destined for a special role. In the same chapter ("Charity"), Santayana argues for cosmic tolerance, "a justice deeper and milder than that of pagan states, a universal justice called charity, a kind of all-penetrating courtesy" (220). Near the end of the book, it appears that he casts an ironic eye on all religious belief,

lumping together superstition, magic, and mythology as a "great exercise in self-projection" (275).

The same tendency of human nature can affect aesthetic judgments, as we learn in *Reason in Art*; dogmatism, he says, may express a sincere preference, "but it becomes absurd when its basis in a particular disposition is ignored and it pretends to have an absolute or metaphysical scope" (191). Santayana recognizes that egotism is quite natural: "[E]very young animal thinks himself absolute, and that dogmatism in the thinker is only the speculative side of greed and courage in the brute." What is evilevil for the best interests of the brutish human being, as well as for those one may victimize or tyrannize overis a system of thought that confirms the natural propensity. Instead of listening to such systems, one should consult one's own real rational interests: "After a man has compared his feelings with no less legitimate feelings of other creatures, he can reassert his own with more complete authority" (192).

In *Reason in Science*, we are prepared for the authoritative role that Santayana gives matter in his philosophy. That book also argues for the Reverend Mr. Darnley's views, by identifying the enemies of scientific truth as those who are prisoners of their own egotisms. Santayana argues that to be an antimaterialist is to set up one's own egotistical certainty against "the divine right of the real." To do this seems hopelessly ludicrous:

> The artificial prejudice against mechanism is a fruit of party spirit. . . .
>
> . . . One dogmatism is not fit to criticise another; their conflict can end only in insults, sullenness, and an appeal to that physical drift

> and irrational selection which may ultimately consign one party to oblivion. . . .
>
> . . . If you are in the habit of believing in special providences, or of expecting to continue your romantic adventures in a second life, materialism will dash your hopes. . . . But a thorough materialist . . . will be like the superb Democritus, a laughing philosopher. . . .
>
> . . . Contempt for mortal sorrows is reserved for those who drive with hosannas the Juggernaut car of absolute optimism. But against evils born of pure vanity and self-deception, against the verbiage by which man persuades himself that he is the goal and acme of the universe, laughter is the proper defense. (8691)

Ordinarily, Santayana was not quite this optimistic. In the event, something more efficient than laughter was needed to deal with the more vicious effects of applied transcendentalism; Marxist and existentialist activism turned out to be more effective against Hitler. Also, of course, let us mention the righteous wrath of an aroused America, Protestant and Hebraic in its tribal outrage. This Epicu-

rean insouciance may help explain the eclipse of interest in Santayana following World War II. But even Bertrand Russell, whose abilities as a practical politician far outstripped those of Santayana, did not abandon his pacifism until the outbreak of actual hostilities, continuing to hope, along with Santayana (and the Charlie Chaplin of *The Great Dictator*) that a combination of reason and ridicule might suffice. But practical politics never was Santayana's strong suit. His purpose was to demolish any claim that transcendental idealism can serve the real interests of the individual human psyche. In order to understand more completely his views of the causes and consequences of philosophic idealism, and especially how these views inform the narrative of *The Last Puritan*, let us continue our survey, examining Santayana's criticism of a line of thought that seemed to him tainted by human presumption, arrogance, and egotism.

The transcendental outlook may be saidinsofar as it can be attributed to one major figureto have originated with Descartes; one way of hearing *cogito ergo sum* is as an assertion of self-creation:

> Descartes was far too radical and incisive a thinker, however, not to feel that it [his method] must apply throughout nature. Imaginative difficulties due to the complexity of animal bodies could not cloud his rational insight. Animal bodies, then, were mere machines, clean-cut and cold engines like so many anatomical manikins. (*Reason in Science* 96)

The irony here underscores the cruelty inherent in philosophical idealism, which excludes all interests other than the single perceiving center. It might be-distressing to violent advocates of

animal rights to have their self-righteousness compared with the complacent vivisections practiced by seventeenth-century Jansenists, but the more thoughtful among them might find support in Santayana's moral views: moral progress, as he sees it, is a matter of expanding the number and extent of one's perspectives, of gaining a deeper insight into the competing claims of various centers of existence and consciousness, of finding ways to harmonize and reconcile these claims. "Growth," he says, "would not come by expressing better an innate soul which involved a particular ideal, but by assimilating more and more external things till the original soul, by their influence, was wholly recast and unrecognisable" (113).

Santayana's notoriety as a nonbelieving apologist for Catholic Christianity is well-deserved; Daniel Cory tells the story of how Santayana bristled indignantly when Cory made a remark about how remote the wealth, pomp, and circumstance of the Vatican were from the humble carpenter of Galilee. This did not stop Santayana, however, from extending his moral strictures to Christianity itself and even to his favorite of all the great poets, Dante. That he did so

lends credence to his claim that he was not simply a latter-day representative of the Inquisition when he railed against German and English philosophy; he argued that it was what they represented as an egotistical possibility for any human being that he detested. It is, nevertheless, a surprise to find the following in the middle of *Three Philosophical Poets*:

> In the next place, Dante talks too much about himself. There is a sense in which this egotism is a merit, or at least a ground of interest for us moderns; for egotism is the distinctive attitude of modern philosophy and of romantic sentiment. In being egotistical Dante was ahead of his time. . . . Dante's egotism goes rather further than was requisite, so that the transcendental insight might not fail in his philosophy. It extended so far that he cast the shadow of his person not only over the terraces of purgatory . . . but over the whole of Italy and of Europe, which he saw and judged under the evident influence of private passions and resentments. (13031)

When Santayana came to write about Goethe in the same book, he was, as if to show himself fair-minded and even-tempered, a little more restrained:

> Now the zest of romanticism consists in taking what you know is an independent and ancient world as if it were material for your private emotions. . . . The romanticist, then, should be a civilized man, so that his primitiveness and egotism may have something paradoxical and conscious about them. . . . At the same time, in his inmost genius, he should be a barbarian, a child, a transcendentalist, so that his life may seem to him absolutely fresh, self-determined, unforeseen, and unforeseeable. . . . In the romantic hero the civilized man and the barbarian must be combined; he should be heir to all civilization, and, nevertheless, he should take life arrogantly and egotistically, as if it were an absolute personal experiment. (14345)

I readily grant that, in retrospect and in view of arguments advanced by Santayana in *Egotism in German Philosophy*, these comments are deeply ironical and imply a radical condemnation. But overtly, at least, he was more severe with Dante than with Goethe.

In *The Realm of Matter*, Santayana gave forceful expression to his feelings about his kind of self-assertion, writing, "I would rather be silent that use some people's language; I would rather die than think as some people think." The sort of thinking that he had in mind was what had beset Oliver Alden since childhood, the wish to impose one's private perspective where it did not belong: "The authority of intuition would be entire if it kept to the definition of essences, and of their essential relations; but when zeal intervenes, and we profess

to find our favorite dialectic in things, we are betrayed into disrespect for nature, and are inflating our egotism to cosmic proportions" (56).

For Santayana, *distraction* is nearly synonymous with *evil*. If we proceed with a literal etymology, we are talking about tearing something away or tearing something apart. Poor Oliver is certainly distracted by his puritan indoctrination and by the other dilemmas that I have mentioned. In *The Realm of Spirit* appears an entire chapter entitled "Distraction," in which we learn that the worst distractioncomparable to mortal sin for a Catholicis self-distraction, willed madness:

> Let me fear nothing, the mad spirit says to itself, let me remember nothing, let me believe nothing. Let me love now what I love now, and call it the love of liberty. . . .
>
> . . . Here we see spirit denying its source and divorcing itself from piety. Piety would attach spirit to nature and to the ancestral order; something contrary to the essential openness of spirit. (174)

Oliver is perilously close to this madness when he dismisses with contempt his friends the Darnleys: Rose is a "little materialist" and "Mr. Darnley lives in a cloud-castle of his own." He thinks: "All these images are shifty and misty and treacherous. What endures is only this spirit, this perpetual witness, wondering at those apparitions, enjoying one, suffering at another, and questioning them all. . . . I can always strip my spirit naked in the night, and my true self will be nameless" (*Last Puritan* 400401 [385]). This self-proclaimed spiritual absolutism is what Santayana rebukes in *The Realm of Spirit*:

> Such is the nemesis that overtakes the pride of knowledge when this

> retreats into intuition and proclaims itself absolute. . . . Spirituality has become egotism; and the ego, full of natural pride and jealousy, begins to assert itself defiantly, arguing the absolute freedom of some natural impulse in the self, not because this impulse is natural (as all impulses must be) nor because it is rational (as it probably is not) but because this impulse is *mine*, because it *exists*, because nothing else can abolish its *right to be as it is*. (17576)

Those of us who have the misfortune to truly lose our tempers from time to time know what he is talking about. Escape from this kind of distraction carries us toward "Union" (the title of another chapter), in which the spirit's "Will is not to will, but to understand all Will; and so without willing any of the ends that universal Will pursues (not even the Will to create spirit) it sees the beauty of all those ends, including the beauty of its own partial but enamoured vision"

(268). In one of his most succinct formulations of his whole position, he writes, "We are not self-created spirits, but everything, including our best inspirations, comes to us from beyond ourselves, from the primeval fountains of matter" (260).

The proper moral balance is hard to strike, but we must aim for it anyway, and it does not involve excluding other points of view: "That every organism must have its own form of life and must love and defend it, goes without saying: but why poison the inevitable conflict of possible forms by insulting your rivals, and saying they have no right to attempt to live" (*Realm of Truth* 105). The effect of doing this is to cut oneself off from truth; overweening self-assertion means self-delusion:

> Here we see that curious self-degradation which is latent in egotism. You seem to be making your self and your experience absolute; yet by that very arrogance you cut yourself off from all intellectual dominion over anything else, and renounce the very thought of natural knowledge or genuine truth. And this fate overtakes the empiricist or pragmatist no less than the absolute idealist who frankly admits it, and thinks it proof of his essential divinity. (43)

One begins to fear that Santayana himself has exploded in Dantesque indignation, that William James is being consigned to an upper level of some structure at the bottom of which will be found Hitler.

The most sweeping formulation of his theory of the origin of egotism in Western philosophy is to be found in *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*. Santayana is prone (to the point of causing himself to be accused of anti-Semitism) to refer to German philosophical egotism as a revival of the Hebraic self-

righteousness, the idea of the chosen people grafted onto a northern European barbarism. It is therefore surprising to find him, in this book, tracing the egotistical side of Christianity to the Greeks, to Platonism, to the concept of the soul as a temporary visitant to the material world. This does fit well with *The Last Puritan*, however, since Platonic and Augustinian philosophy are commonly identified as constituents of Calvinism. To trace Santayana's line of thought: The Platonic conception of the soul affirmed in Christianity the Hebraic idea of an eternal principle of being or identity that existed independent of the body. Belief in the "self-existing and immortal spirit" then led, in Catholic theology, to emphasis being placed on the state of the soul at the moment of death, and the idea of the resurrection of the body (which Santayana credits Judaism with) and of the Last Judgment became less important.

> There was thus a strong undercurrent tending to identify the soul with pure spirit, an undercurrent which came to the surface at last in Descartes. The Platonic myths could not be accepted by the Church. The intrinsic self-existence of each soul through infinite past and future time not only contradicted the dogma of creation, but rendered theism superfluous. . . . Furthermore, if the destiny of each soul was determined only by its own free actions, salvation, grace, and the effectual intervention of charity would be abolished; and ultimately that society of monads would retreat into a thought in a solitary spirit and not be a society at all. Such is the nemesis of egotism." (*Idea of Christ* 22324)

Santayana does see the Hebraic idea of the covenant combining with this concept of the self-subsisting spirit preserved in Christianity and contributing to the distracting effects of Cartesian dualism, British empiricism, Protestant theology, philosophical idealism, romanticism, pragmatism, and any other development in Western thought that tends toward setting up the individual consciousness as a self-created spirit. The basis of his argument is set out at length and with great clarity and persuasiveness in *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*. Let two more examples suffice:

> [I]t was moralistic insolence in Milton to profess to justify the ways of God to man. The justification of God's ways is that he has chosen them. What ultimate reason can any of us give for loving anything, except that we love it?
>
> The dialectical irony latent in moralism appears most clearly in certain personal philosophies, simple and born full-grown, such, for example, as those of Marcus Aurelius and Spinoza. Both these solitary heroes begin by making vehement and sweeping moral

> demands, they both in the end abandon all moralistic claims in reverence for the divine order of things. (2078)

This is what Santayana meant when he wrote about Oliver Alden that he lacked this quality of solitary heroism (as most of us do) and that there was no tradition, no sound body of wisdom, to take the place of an all-but-impossible philosophical virtue. But at least Oliver arrives at the problem, if not the solution.

Oliver's Final Enlightenment

Peter Alden has spent his life avoiding the problem that torments Oliver. He concludes his meaningless existence with a hideous parody of the death of Socrates:

> Peter would have to omit on this occasion the libation due the gods. That patron of medicine-men, Asclepius the Savior, familiar with serpents, would have to go without the thank-offering prescribed for an easy death. . . . All was ready. Papers, bank account, even clothes would be found in perfect order. There was nothing more to do but quietly go to sleep and never to wake up again. (*Last Puritan* 331 [319])

Santayana has thought over the pros and cons of such an end to life. It was reasonable in terms of Stoic and Epicurean philosophybut not in terms of Spinoza, Christianity, or even Schopenhauer. It is the way of a Swinburnian Julian the Apostate, which Santayana seemed to many Catholics to be but in fact was not. Clearly, we are supposed to see Peter as a horrible example, not as a reasonable alternative.

On board the *Lusitania*, headed back to the United States following the news of his father's suicide, Oliver feels the pull of the world's substance, what I have called a nostalgia for matter itself. Nature draws him toward her, toward a sounder realization of his place in the order of things:

> The normal order of nature here reasserted itself against the accident of progress. . . . Oliver liked to feel that he contained and enveloped within himself all the lower faculties of man. . . . He liked, or imagined he might like, sometimes to recover and enact the primitive clansman or the solitary hunter or even the mere animal or vegetable within his human nature; yes, it might be an extraordinary relief, an ultimate homecoming, if one could lose oneself and be absorbed again in the mere weight and potentiality of matter. . . . There seemed to be two selves or two natures within him; one, pure spirit, that might play any game and lodge in any animal; the other,

> this particular human, American, twentieth century male person called Oliver Alden. (351 [338])

Unfortunately, instead of recognizing the authority of matter, he turns transcendental:

> The spirit felt at home beforehand in the unknown future, as it did in the forgotten past. Like the sea, it was greater than any islands or continents of fact that might nestle within it. It was an inviolate witness of all mutations, a poet turning all human tragedies into music, all human folly into laughter. (353 [340])

Learning that Jim is aboard the same ship, Oliver, in his philosophical elation, determines to effect his moral rescue. Jim is to be the object of Goethean good

intentions. The little joke on Kant's categorical imperative in the following quotation implies that Oliver has felt a sudden conviction of the moral law within:

> He [Jim] must be pulled out, aired, ventilated, reminded of his genuine pleasures and of his young friend, his *superior* young friendfor Oliver had learned from Schopenhauer that groundless modesty was a faulthis one remaining link with decency: because the Vicar's influence over his son was like that of the starry heavens, at once too sublime and too constant to make any difference. (361 [348])

Back in America, as a star fullback for the Williams football team, Oliver assumes a new role as a wounded romantic hero, breaking his leg in the game in which Harvard is defeated. After a visit from Mario and his distant cousin Edith (whom he subsequentlyfor a brief timeplans to marry) he lies in his hospital bed, sick from the pain and even more from the anesthetics. Suddenly the whole world, except for his "true friends" Edith and Mario, seems evil and treacherous to him; suddenly, his sense of his own spirit as a pure witness, judging and acquitting as it sees fit, is more acute than ever. It is at this pointas I noted abovethat he is closest to a Nietzschean madness.

When Oliver enters Harvard as a graduate student, he finds that he has been assigned Emerson's old room in Divinity Hall; the joke, of course, is not that Oliver is in any sense a spiritual heir of Emerson but that Emerson represented a genteel revival of puritan religious enthusiasm for whom the old bottle of Unitarianism was insufficiently sturdy. So in a sense, Oliver, the last puritan, is his predecessor's spiritual parent.

Santayana takes this occasion to introduce himself into the body of the novel for a second timenow as a teacher of philosophy rather than as a personality, letting us know, in a wonderfully unobtrusive and quietly humorous way, that Oliver had been his student. Oliver composes a short essay on Plato. But, "It was not the spirit of Plato, nor of Emerson, his predecessor in that student's chamber, that now descended on Oliver: it was his own spirit that inspired him." Actually it is not Oliver's spirit. It is Santayana's spirit. Under the influence of his teacher, Oliver has almost been saved from Germanic philosophy, from his own puritanism, from his spiritual division, from a self-defeating self-assertiveness. It makes an excellent summary of Santayana's own Platonic sideand some of the ways in which he differs from Plato.

To begin with, Santayana placed a high value on friendshipfriendship quite untainted by any residue of physical desire. As I pointed out in chapter 4, his objection to Plato was the obverse of most people's in that he found in Plato a tendency to elevate material existences into ideals; he felt that Plato's *ideas*

were mythologized existences, however abstract, perfect, and remote they seemed to be. Similarly, for Santayana, what we usually mean by "Platonic love" carries a fleshly taintthe possibility, if not the actuality, of physical possession. Friendship, feels Oliver, like his author, involves "love, perhaps the highest and most intense love, but there is not a bit of desire; or if desire creeps in, it is by the intrusion of mere sensuality, which has nothing to do with friendship and is at once driven out by friendship, when friendship is clear and strong." Oliver likewise verges on Santayana's moral philosophy: "We can never feel in our own persons the ecstatic bliss of being a perfect porpoise or a perfect eagle. But reason in us may correct our human prejudices, and may convince us that other forms of life are as desirable for other creatures as our own form of life is for us" (439 [420]).

From this time forward, Oliver assumes a more critical view of himself and his view of the world. He rejects the worst of transcendental philosophy and rejects common romantic attitudes:

> You might fall in love with paganism, as Goethe did; but you mustn't condone nature's crimes, you mustn't become a pagan in your heart. That has been Goethe's mistake. In your heart you must remain a Platonist or a Christian, as the Vicar remained: not by any sentimental attachment to tradition or any flabbiness of thought, but because it was the very nature of the heart to choose a pure good, and to cleave to it. (509 [48687])

But as this quotation shows, Oliver is still judging, still choosing, still asserting his own authority as a spiritual witness, still

deciding what the good is, still unwilling to give any tradition its say against, or in support of, his own inner assurance.

In Germany, he buckles down to "hard solitary work," though still so "confirmed in his spiritual self-reliance" that he scarcely trusts any authority. Like Santayana, he comes to realize that in limited respects, the transcendental view is inevitable and indeed an essential critique of the conditions of knowledge and self-awareness. Here the novel takes on a technical tone as the author begins to slip into the vocabulary of *Realms of Being* when he has Oliver wonder to himself, "Couldn't the grammar of thought be studied without confusing it with cosmology?" (510 [48788]). But this is the crucial stage of Oliver's self-enlightenment; he may not have the independence of a Spinoza or Marcus Aurelius, but having been given a slight twist in the right direction by Professor Santayana back at Harvard, he can begin to disburden himself intellectually of his puritanism or at least begin to understand his malady.

> To enlighten desire; to pick up the thread of salvation in this labyrinth of folly; to discern the causes of heathen bewilderment and the contrary principles of a pure life, wasn't that what Buddha and Lao Tse had done, but too soberly for the rabble? Wasn't it what Socrates had done, only too late for the Greeks? Wasn't it what the early Christians had failed to do, because they were puffed up with fables, and the Puritans, because they were blighted by fanaticism? Might not we to-day in the ebb-tide of so many illusions trace the course of the last flood and learn to escape the next one? (510 [488])

Oliver seems on the verge of complete enlightenment. A short stay amid the lingering sunset of Platonism and Christianity at Oxford is conducive to a final, though gentle, disillusionment. On the eve of the outbreak of the war, we find him thinking:

> What was there in the very nature of things that condemned nature? Plato, Plotinus, and the secret force of Christianity drew all their poignancy from that question.
>
> It was agreed that these systems had no historical or cosmological truth: their ground and justification was only human and psychological. They expressed mythically the revolt of man's moral nature against the actual world. But if man's moral nature contradicts the world and runs counter to it, ought not that moral nature to be transformed and made harmonious with the reality? (520 [497])

Just here Oliver surpasses the Vicar of Iffley in theological acuity. He had long before set aside his angry and self-tormenting castigation of the Darnleys and had accepted the Vicar's view that Christianity was originally part poetry and part delusion. But the Vicar, in his ministry, seems incapable of relinquishing the old form; he may have learned wisdom, but he

cannot teach it. He is representative of a kind of resigned inefficacy that stands midway between the Oxford Movement and the evangelical wing of the Church of England; his personal obscurity and lack of self-assertiveness make one think of what has in fact been the fate of the Church of England since World War II.

Another way to look at the Vicar is to see him as yet one more father figure for Oliver, one whophilosophicallyerrs in the postrational direction as did his actual father. His is a form of belief (or nonbelief) that Oliver can learn from, one that he can love, when he is not himself suffering from the transcendental hectic. He is as close to Oliver on the spiritual side as Vanny is on the physical. Vanny is a prerational type who has been corrected and civilized by his Catholic and Italian connections. Vanny is an improvement on Lord Jima child of the

flesh, but not a criminal. Peter and Jim have their hellish sides; Vanny and the Vicar are redeemed, or at least redeemable.

There are corresponding patterns in the women of the novel, with Edith and Rose much closer to what Oliver needs than Mrs. Alden or Irma (or, to be sure, the comically caricatured demimondaine whose breath, redolent of pickles and sardines, makes her passionate kiss intolerable). But Edith is too "spiritual" and marries her clergyman, while Rose is too simply a natural creature who cannot rise to Oliver's social or intellectual level and who positively does not wish to do so. These patterns, too, each have their philosophical implications, but it is best to say simply that they reflect Oliver's tragic duality.

To return to Oliver: he has achieved his philosophical enlightenment, if not emancipation, but he is immediately hurried onward by events before he can work out for himself what its practical consequences ought to be. War breaks out. Vanny succumbs to mindless patriotism and indeed begins to talk like a postwar Italian fascist. Oliver rejects Germany, seeing in it what inspired Santayana's wartime book, *Egotism in German Philosophy*. He has less use for Goethe than ever, not the "expurgated, verbal, ladylike Goethe that Irma had set before him," but "Goethe the vitalist, the heathen, the super-moralist, venerating power, fawning on success. That was the Goethe with real sap in him, blooming again in Nietzsche, in Bismarck, and in this war; the greedy Goethe that had inspired so many greedy professors and doctors and sycophants of to-day." He sees the same potential in his own country, but "In America these vices were childlike, unconscious, easily yielding to kindness and

goodwill; but in Germany they rankled, nursed by centuries of envy, hatred, and deliberate self-praise" (52728 [504]).

After this, Oliver has no time for philosophyand indeed, there is nowhere much for him to go, philosophically, or much to do except to apply the conclusions that he has arrived at, to flesh them out with a greater range of experience. He seems to have thought at times of returning after the war to teach philosophy, but this is not a settled plan or ambitiononly a vague preference or possibility.

The war is certainly an evil for Oliver as for everyone elsebut it does not kill him; it only distracts him from applying his wisdom. He actually dies in an automobile accident after the armisticehis life cut short by a mere whim of material circumstances, not a tragic inevitability wrought by human folly. To say that the war *distracts* him is to introduce into the discussion a word that was, for Santayana, as I have said several times, a synonym for *evil*; it is possible that, had it not been for the war, Oliver might have found a vocation as a scholar and teacher of philosophy, redeeming himself from the accidents of existence just as

Santayana had saved himself. But to speak of him this wayto begin to speculate about his unrealized possibilitiesis to begin to be deceived by the artistry of the narrative, to forget that it is all a story and only a story, but to admit, in so doing, that the illusion of life, the drama of human existence, has been achieved in *The Last Puritan*.

10
Santayana and His Critics

The books of all great philosophers are like so many men. Our sense of an essential personal flavor in each one of them, typical but indescribable, is the finest fruit of our own philosophic education.
William James, *Pragmatism*

Near the End of World War II, not long after the Allies had liberated Rome, *Life* magazine ran a feature on George Santayana that included a full-page photograph that showed him sitting on a park bench reading a book. The reporter claimed that as Santayana read the book he tore the pages out and dropped them into a trash container. No explanation was offered for this curious behavior, and as it turns out the account was untrue. Santayana had separated a heavy work into signatures that would fit into his pocket, but he was not throwing the pages away. This illustrates, in however small a way, the manner in which fabrications tended to gather around Santayana and how he was constantly the object of picturesquesometimes maliciousanecdotes.

Santayana had ridden out the conflict in the nursing home staffed by an English order of Catholic nuns, many of whom were Irish, a residence he maintained for the rest of his life; with the conclusion of hostilities, he began to receive a stream of visitors, among them Gore Vidalwho claimed to be shocked and horrified at Santayana's amused complacency over Italian politics. Another future literary celebrity who sought him out was Robert Lowell,

who reported excitedly in a letter to his friend Peter Taylor that Santayana evidently took great interest in him and his poetry. Santayana's name appeared often in the popular press; the *New Yorker* printed an account of a visit that Edmund Wilson made to the convent and also a review, by W. H. Auden, of one segment of his autobiography. Only a few years earlier, Ezra Pound had attempted to enlist him, along with T. S. Eliot, in a grandiose scheme to reform European culture. One of the most prominent names in philosophy and literature before the war, his isolation in Rome during those years had only increased his enigmatic appeal and deepened the mysteries that seem to surround his thought and personality.

For Americans interested in philosophy and literature at that time, Santayana was an object of pilgrimage much like the popeto whom, indeed, he humorously compared himself, allowing numerous visitors but never returning visits. In the years following his death in 1952, however, Santayana's name gradually faded in the popular mind; most who have heard of him at all associate him in a muddled way with an out-of-context remark about what happens to those who do not study history. Among students of philosophy he has fared even worse. Most contemporary philosophies, whether analytic, existential, or otherwise, neglect or totally discount the work of Santayana. Analytic philosophy, the dominant academic mode in the English-speaking world, has been particularly oblivious to his existence. On current Internet discussion groups, one need only drop the name of Quine or Sartre, Lacan or Derrida, to start a lively exchange. Mention Santayana and you might as well have mentioned Santa Claus, for all the response it provokes. Despite the publication of several important and controversial books about him in recent years, he still attracts about as much interest today as does the object of his doctoral dissertation, the German Lotze, whose fame faded rapidly after the turn of the last century.

Santayana did not live to see the full flowering of existentialism. I suspect that if he had left a critique of Sartre, he would have discovered an inordinate preoccupation with individual moral choices, the consequences of predicaments that Santayana himself had never felt the need to confront. But he had long since identified the analytic trend in philosophy as a natural continuation of German idealism and British empiricism, in both of which he saw an excessive emphasis on the importance of the

subjective experience of the individual human being. In an essay, "The Progress of Philosophy," he said:

> Their subject matter is human knowledge; and the titles of many of the chief works of this school confess that this is their only theme. Not moral life, much less the natural world, but simply the articulation of knowledge occupies them; and yet, by the hocus-pocus of metaphysics, they substitute this human experience for the whole universe in which it arises. (*Soliloquies in England* 216)

As with his *Egotism in German Philosophy*, these remarks, dating from approximately the same time (191417), are uncannily predictive of future directions. Titles from academic presses in the second half of this century often bear the names of Russell, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Quine, and Ayer; until recently, almost none have included Santayana.

At least part of the reason for this neglect is the personal obloquy to which Santayana had been subjected even before his death, which has affected his

reputation for nearly fifty yearsserious indeed for a philosopher in whose work the human equation matters as much as, though no more than, all mathematics and natural sciences combined. If we are dealing with an effete fascist elitist, a malicious old gossip, a feline ironist, a cynical aestheteall views that have actually been taken of himcan we trust anything he says? Happily, it is possible not only to dissipate much of this invective but also to enlist on Santayana's side, contrary to that other philosopher's intentions, one of the founders of the analytic movement in contemporary philosophy, Bertrand Russell.

By tracing carefully the course of Santayana's relations with Russell, by explaining Russell's antipathy to him, and by accounting for the evident dislike that many other of his contemporaries felt for him in the 1940s, I hope to make a contribution toward rehabilitating Santayana, especially for ordinary readers of nontechnical philosophy. The cause and consequences of the attacks on Santayana are also interesting in themselves as a chapter in twentieth-century intellectual history.

Among the many important lessons that Santayana owed to William James was the Jamesian conviction that the personalities of philosophers could not be separated from their theories. The philosopher, wrote Santayana,

> cannot distinguish the comic cast of his own thought; yet inevitably it shows the hue and features of his race; it has its curious idiom and constitutional grammar, its quite personal rhetoric, its ridiculous ignorances and incapacities, and when his work is finished and its expression set, and other people behold it, it becomes under his name one of the stock masks, or *dramatis personae* of the moral

> world. In it every wrinkle of his soul is eternalized. (*Soliloquies in England* 160)

As a consequence of this belief, Santayana never hesitated to speak in his own person and never pretended that his views expressed disembodied truths. He did often assert that reason was speaking through him, but he did not equate reason with the voice of God in the sense that, say, John Milton did. He insisted that even what seemed to be the most recondite or ineffable of his theories, the theory of essence, was only a recognition of what was immediately at hand, available to any perceiving animal. And he insisted that the perceiving center, the locus, the point of view, was necessarily involved in what it perceivedand colored it, without creating it or changing it, according to its interests. This coloration was not an illusion or a distortion; it was inevitable and significant. The nature of the percipient creaturein his case, the personality of a philosopherwas as important as anything else, though not more important. There are at least two consequences of philosophizing according to such convictions. One

may be completely ignored by those who assume that personal involvement invalidates intellectual conclusions or one may be attacked and discredited personally. Santayana has suffered both consequences, and most contemporary philosophies, whether analytic, existential, or otherwise, neglect or totally discount his work.

Almost no one who knew Santayana while he was alive was in a position to understand much about his character and personality. No one who met him in later years had set eyes on either of his parents or could judge to what extent he had inherited from them that fund of skeptical reserve remarked frequently by his contemporaries. None of his colleagues at Harvard seem to have guessed what it might have meant, as a nine-year-old child, to have been uprooted from a native land, to have been cut off from the language and religion of his childhood, and to have endured calmly arranged separations from, and dispassionate reunions with, both parents, at different times and on opposite sides of the Atlantic.

Santayana, at least in his later years, understood himself very welleven making use of some insights from Freudian developmental psychology. But in 1912, the end of his time at Harvard, the sympathetic appreciation of the effect of childhood experiences on adult personality was not commonplace; and his aloofness, in any case, would not have invited such understanding. He gave the impression of having chosen to be fastidiously disengaged and of being a little contemptuous of any emotional turmoil in the lives of those with whom he associated. This was a wrong impression; one only needs to read his novel

and his autobiography to realize that, if anything, Santayana was excessively sensitive to, and much interested in, the personalities and predicaments of those around him. But his own experienceup to the age of twelvehad been both too complex and too alien for anyone else to understand; even his half sister Susana only partly knew him. It was left to Santayana to comprehend Santayana; he always felt himself cut off and out of place.

Most of those who surrounded Santayana during his American years seemed thoroughly at home: attending school, going to church, marrying, begetting children, merging with the vitality of the Gilded Age. Santayana never managed to blend in; even his participation in the activities of Harvard College, when he was a student, were often enough calculated performances. He operated in terms of what one might call emotional diplomacyeverything correct but not *too* correctplaying by the rules but not showing his cards. Robust personalities, such as that affected by William James, may be indulgent toward outright cranks and eccentrics and at the same time lose patience with vestigial maladjustments in those whose fundamental soundness they accept. There was

always something faintly alien about Santayana. At least, those around him were aware that things had gone into the making of his character that they did not understand. And bafflement sometimes led to irritation and hostility.

When considering Santayana, who was 33 at the time, for promotion to assistant professor, Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard, described him as a "withdrawn, contemplative man who takes no part in the everyday work of the institution" (qtd. in Munsterberg 70). In 1944, forty-seven years later, neither Alfred North Whitehead nor his wifeboth famous for kindliness and hospitalityfound him any more attractive. Asked about Santayana's capacity for irony, Mrs. Whitehead called it "denigrating and destructive." Speaking a little more as the professional philosopher, Whitehead said: "With Santayana's philosophy, I have the feeling that he is merely playing with ideas, all is cool, detached, and almost indifferent. He just misses greatness and I believe it is because he is lacking in sincerity" (*Dialogues* 26566).

These three points of view on Santayanaconsidering him as an academic appointee, as a person, and as a thinkerall share two common responses to him. First, there is the impression of aloofness, of fastidious noninvolvement in most human concerns, of a fundamental lack of commitment. And coupled with this is an evident dislike of the man and his work, an apparent desire to diminish both. And yet Eliot did approve his appointment, and Whitehead consistently urged his students to read Santayana.

Treatments of Santayana's philosophy may be found, of course,

in which calm exposition supervenes over contentiousness. One thinks especially of Timothy Sprigge's book and, reaching further back, the chapter "American Neo-Realism" in B. A. G. Fuller's *History of Philosophy*. The usual approach, however, has been argumentative and, often enough, antagonistic. The antipathy or partiality, or both, can be to some extent explained by the very eclecticism of his synthesis. Santayana assimilated the points of view of a vast range of philosophies, but in so doing he exposed each to a ruthless critique, which established multiple grounds for taking issue with him; anyone can find something about which to quarrel with Santayana. For all his suave urbanity, Santayana held philosophy to a severe standard; his strictures on Spinoza, who was for him the greatest of the moderns, were such that his editors removed them from his autobiography, evidently considering them needlessly inflammatory.

But even sympathetic treatments of Santayana often conclude with a remark that the author intends as a caustic or cautery to burn out some festering and maggoty philosophical error. One would hardly expect an entire book about Santayana (Singer's *Santayana's Aesthetics*) to end in this way: "Epistemological distinctions, such as Santayana's, force experience into an artificial, unreward-

ing mold. Here, as elsewhere, let us learn how to dispense with them" (222). Such pronouncements often can be dated by their tone, and they usually belong to the 1950s.

Perhaps it is inevitable that the discussion be conducted in this way; Santayana himself believed in asserting one's own legitimate interests and in distinguishing one's friends and enemies as a necessary condition for survival of the organism, or psyche, as he preferred to call it. Using *psyche* in this way to mean a self-preserving biological entity was his means of deprecating the term, reducing human pretensions much as "animal faith" does. But he believed in defending himself; wherever he discovered a threat, he attacked it. No one who loves Kant is likely to be a friend of Santayanastill less will any member of a Browning Society or an American academic enamored of Walt Whitman find him congenial. He was able in controversy, displaying an almost Scholastic appetite for itand it is hardly surprising that comments others make about Santayana reflect this.

It is a commonplace to say that most criticism of Shakespeare tells us at least as much about the critic, or the age, as it does about Shakespeare. That is not quite true of Santayana; but those who attack him often see a reflection of some other philosopher whose work they dislike or judge to be flawed, whereas admiring critics are likely to have found their own favorite system or point of view exemplified. Read Bertrand Russell's remarks on Aquinas or on the "public" philosophy of Leibnitz, both of which he disapproved, and you will already know a good deal about what he thinks of Santayanabelieving that he

found in Santayana the same things. John Crowe Ransom called him a "diffused modern version of Schopenhauer." Those who dislike Plato attack him as a Platonist, while those who love Plato often revere Santayana as a thinker who perfected and refined the theory of ideas. Orthodox Catholics think that his naturalism subverts dogma; naturalists in philosophy often consider him a Catholic apologist. Those Catholics who tried and failed to "bring him over" would be surprised to hear others speak contemptuously of Santayana as a Scholastic. Elsewhere, he is attacked as a humanistin the line of James and Deweyand attacked in other quarters for not being a humanist.

There are numerous examples of such paradoxical treatment. One finds him acknowledged as a figure of great authority and personal charmand, in the same breath, or some millions of breaths later, denounced for his detachment, disingenuousness, lack of originality, isolation, and lack of human attachments. An extraordinary instance of such rejection is found in *The Philosophy of George Santayana,* volume 2 of *The Library of Living Philosophers*. Given his age76when it was published in 1940, it ought to have had something of the character

of a *festschrift*, an assembly of eighteen friends, former colleagues, and professional peers proffering their bouquets, or at least their dispassionate assessments of his work. Instead, many of the pieces scarcely disguise their hostility, taking a tone for which Santayana himself had to provide the excuse: "Perhaps the times have brought on a fresh wave of zeal in political and racial matters that sweeps away superficial sympathies and exposes the hidden lines of cleavage in the depths" ("Apologia" 538). It was, after all, the end of what W. H. Auden (in his poem "September, 1939") called "a low, dishonest decade." The happy outcome was that these slings and arrows stirred the old man into a spirited defense, a brilliantly eloquent and rational reassertion of himself and his views in the "Apologia Pro Mente Sua" that concludes the volume. Yet we may still wonder why so many who had previously paid tribute to him as a colleague, mentor, or friend turned on him with spontaneous hostility. Here are the words of Irwin Edman, a former admirer and the editor of the Modern Library selection of Santayana's philosophy, who by 1940 had turned against him:

> A purified taste in images is a pleasant release from the problem of existence. It is a way of escaping beyond good and evil. But it is implicitly a denial of that very humanism which has been Santayana's most impressive claim to wisdom; the vision of human ideals and their possible accomplishment turns into an ironic disdain for them. (311)

As Edman continues, we see him trying to twist Santayana into a semblance of one of the German thinkers against whom Santayana had battled for so long. Notice, for example, "beyond good and evil," a taunting reference to Nietzsche. "All existence

comes to have the status of a soliloquy," complains Edman, forgetting, or remembering too well, the immense popularity and the broad human sympathy of *The Last Puritan*. "And are not subjectivism in thought and willfulness in morals Santayana's own characterization of 'egotism in philosophy?'" Edman, who knew Santayana's work in great detail, ranges over it, placing everywhere the worst interpretation that he can. We see in Edman a person who had so completely absorbed Santayana's point of view that when he attempted to reject it, he could only do so in terms of what Santayana had taught him to dislike. So Edman tried to make him over into the ultimate transcendental egotist. Elsewhere, Edman's Santayana sounds like the most pessimistic and postrational cousin of Julian the Apostate. "There is a kind of deliverance in this, the consolation of a poet's Nirvana, or the detachment of the aesthete playing irresponsibly over an anarchy of images" (310). Actually, Santayana had anticipated such an attack more than fifty years before, referring to himself humorously as a "supercilious Epicurean maggot."

Reading Edman's attack, which continues page after relentless page, one wonders if this can be the same person who, five years earlier, in his introduction to *The Philosophy of Santayana*, had written:

> The whole body of his work reveals a candid wisdom, classically bred. It is colored with glinting ironies and gleaming insights, with tragic awareness of suffering, deception and death, with intimations of the ideal "struggling to light among the thorns." Detachment here becomes compassionate understanding; it is neither indifference nor propaganda; it is, both simply and profoundly, philosophy. Truth here, too, speaks with the accent of grace, in a prose cadenced, marmoreal and pure. (lvi)

The explanation for this change of heart, according to Daniel Cory, is that Edman hadsome years before he penned his condemnationdrawn Santayana into a discussion of "charity" while visiting him in Rome, evidently with the hope of reforming his adopted mentor. Edman, like many others, concluded that Santayana was too aloof, not sufficiently willing to mingle in loving association with his fellow human beings. The tone of his subsequent treatment of Santayana reflects in part his frustration at his own failure to play a pivotal role in the older philosopher's lifeif we are to accept Cory's account of Edman's demeanor when the three of them were together.

Even more amazing than Edman's attack is Santayana's display of equanimity and good humornay, ebullient witin replying to it, even countering the thrust of the phrase "beyond good and evil":

> [H]e paints a melancholy picture of vacuity of the life to which I have condemned myself. The withered Indian gymnosophist (whom I do not much resemble in belief or in way of living) chooses death

> out of self-love, and by losing his individuality in Brahma or in Nirvana abandons all distinction between good and evil. This is the opposite of what I call egotism, which consists in imposing one's special categories and standards, as alone right or possible, upon all mankind and even upon God and nature. But that is a matter of words. ("Apologia" 561)

A matter of words indeed! Whose words? Those of Spinoza*Deus sive natura*. Ever so quietly, Santayana reminds Edman and the rest of us that his own philosophy was grounded in a Spinozistic reverence for "the divine right of the real," the furthest thing from transcendental egotism.

Another contributor to *The Philosophy of George Santayana* who formerly had written admiringly about his thought but who also took the opportunity to demolish his progenitor was Milton K. Munitz. Santayana treated Munitz chari-

tably, not harshly, when he replied to him, "Munitz in particular has ingeniously refuted me out of my own mouth, searching in the most out-of-the-way corners for something of mine that might seem to contradict me, and subjecting me to a retrospective cross-examination. He does it admirably, and if ever he should wish, like me, to abandon the thankless teaching of philosophy, I am sure he might make his mark as a prosecuting attorney" ("Apologia" 538).

It is difficult to see Munitz's piece as anything other than irresponsible scholarship. Santayana must have realized that he need not even point out that (on page 212) Munitz had run together, in a single quotation, sentence fragments from three different pages in two books and that those fragments themselves consist of snippets from different sentences on those pages. Munitz's footnote and marks of ellipsis reveal the procedures almost as if he had deliberately provided us with the means to defuse his own bomb. The attack also mitigates its own effects by identifying Santayana's errors with what Santayana had himself found wanting in Platonism and Christianity; Munitz accuses Santayana of myth-making in connection with his own favorite theory, the theory of essence. If the worst thing that can be said about you is that you are as bad as a Christian Platonist, perhaps there is some hope for you. Here is Munitz:

> One may say of the realm of essence what Santayana has said of the supernaturalism of Platonism and Christianity: "There is a sort of acoustic illusion in it; the voice that reverberates from the heavens is too clearly a human voice." . . .
>
> . . . Santayana's own metaphysics of essence, however, although

> equally a myth, does not even serve to express a genuine moral ideal. (21415)

Santayana's reply is spirited, firm, temperate, and as thorough as the attack warranted. Patiently, he points out that Munitz is treating essences as if they were existing things, as if they exercised some sort of authority, rather than being undeniable and irreducible qualities that we, as extant beings, may entertain and that matter appropriates.

It is remarkable how persistent is this tendency to assign to Santayana's essences an efficacy, a potency, so that even in the midst of an otherwise meticulous and lucid account of them, one may come across a sentence (which in part actually echoes something Santayana wrote) such as "Essences, then, are the qualities, structures, and relations that make existence possible" (Lachs 41). My point is that ambiguity through minor inadvertence is easy enough and will no doubt be found in what I myself have written about Santayana's essences. But in Munitz, it is a willful distortion, a perverse upending of Santayana's priori-

ties, as when he says, "Possibility is now the ontologic ground of actuality. . . . For, if we look closely, the ontology of essence, instead of being an antecedent locus for its exploration by human experience, bears the marks, on the contrary, of its original human incidence and genius" (200, 214).

Even more surprising is the way that Munitz appropriated the word *moral* without bothering to relate it to Santayana's own concept of morality, arguing that "it is a notion that needs to be discarded not merely as metaphysics but even as a metaphoric expression of a possible moral ideal as well" (215). If one is going to condemn the theory of essence, then one ought to ask whether Santayana's ideas about morality apply to the realm of essence, and if so, how. I have had more to say on what Santayana meant when he spoke of the essences, of the realm of essence, but we may remark here that what he did not mean was some realm of ideals that he claimed to have invented and that represented patterns of ideal existence. To speak of them as such is to revert to something like the position that G. E. Moore (and Bertrand Russell, too, until Santayana convinced him otherwise) maintained, that good and evil were absolute standards, absolute criteria. Santayana used *essence* to designate the unavoidable qualities, the undeniable traits, the immediate given of consciousness or experience, which in themselves were amoral. There is no need to "discard" them as "a metaphoric expression of a possible moral ideal," because Santayana never took them in that sense.

What Munitz forgot was that, when it came to moral philosophy, Santayana's guiding light was Spinoza. To speak of morals was

not to speak of essences; it was to speak of the goods and preferences partial to some particular existing entity. Speaking of opinions and judgments, Santayana writes: "They are all creations of some living psyche, of human senses and passions stimulated and controlled by external facts. They therefore are indicative, first, of the life of the organism, its well-being or distress, and secondly of the character of the environment, expressed in the language of psychic life" ("Apologia" 539).

Shortly after World War II ended, as peacetime conditions and incipient postwar prosperity revived the publishing industry, the attack on Santayana got under way in earnest. Young men who had nurtured left-wing sympathies in the 1930s and who had relished the total destruction of fascism in Europe looked at Santayana's work and suddenly detected in it a collaborationist tinge, a snobbishness, a contempt for the lower orders, a Catholic toleration for the Brown Shirts of the world. Malcolm Cowley, writing in the April 30, 1945, *New Republic*, reviewed the second volume of Santayana's autobiography and let fall these remarks:

> There were other poets at Harvard in those years: Edwin Arlington Robinson and Robert Frost, to mention only two; but both of these were poor boys, socially unrecognized, and they were not likely to attract Santayana's attention. As a young instructor he liked to associate with college swells. . . .
>
> . . . Peace with the polite world and the political world and all the reigning powers is a central point in Santayana's philosophy. . . .
>
> . . . Those were the days when Harvard was afflicted with a multiplicity of caste distinctions: Yard against Gold Coast; clubs against fraternities against the great mass of the unaffiliated and unrecognized. Santayana had nothing to do with founding the system, but in one sense he bears a little of the responsibility for it: that is, he approved it, followed its rules, and gave it the support of his prestige as a philosopher. (59192)

Cowley, literary activist that he was, found it hard to appreciate any approach to letters that did not involve active engagement and assumed that aloofness meant approval. One asks what Cowley made of Santayana's comments about how uncomfortable he was at Harvard and wonders why Cowley did not ask himself whyif Ivy League snobbishness was so appealingSantayana quit Harvard as soon as he was able to. But memories of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, among other antifascist undertakings, were still fresh at that time, and the satisfaction at Mussolini's downfall was intense. The heroes of the hour were the French Resistance fighters; to many, Santayana seemed a sort of intellectual Marshal Pétain, too much the Catholic collaborationist.

But Santayana could seem out of step with his times in other ways. Max Eastman, a former student and longtime reader of

Santayana, in 1951 published a complimentary, though patronizingly sentimental, account of some visits with his former teacher. "In his attitude to his philosophy, especially, he reminded me of a child who has built a wonderful castle out of blocks" ("Philosopher in a Convent" 40). No wonder Santayana ceased to give interviews and forbade publication of any description of a visit to him! Two months later, Eastman decided to exploit another angle and published "Sex and Santayana: New Light on the Mind and Opinions of the Famous Thinker." This time he managed, without ever using the term, to insinuate that Santayana was homosexual. It is hard, late in this century, to recall the unspeakable shame that such an allegation was intended to entailespecially in an American mass-media publication; it would be two decades before *New Yorker* editorial policy would allow any reference to homosexuality. But the 1950s were a wonderful time for the McCarthyites and for reactionaries generally, and Eastman knew his audience.

> [T]here is perhaps a significance in Santayana's spending his last years in a nunnery. In my mind, it runs to the fact that he played leading lady in the Harvard theatricals of 1884, and two years later danced as a ballerina in the Hasty Pudding play. It calls up the fact that when he was a boy and his brother read Shakespeare aloud, he liked *Julius Caesar*, but found *Romeo and Juliet* "inexpressibly silly." It chimes with his earnest, though not unsmiling, proof that angelsalthough they do not existare of the male sex. (73)

Incidentally, that last sentence refers to what some have interpreted as an anti-Semitic remark; in the quotation referred to by Eastman, Santayana speaks of a passage in Jewish sacred literature that says that angels were circumcised. What Eastman did with Santayana's little joke is typical of his brand of pulp journalism. Santayana had long since realized that his leanings had been homosexual in his early years. He was surprised when none of the reviews of his novel even hinted at the homosexual themes that strike a reader at the end of the century as almost too obvious. Yet Eastman winked and snickered and invited his readers to join him in uncovering the sage's dirty little secret, perhaps hoping that time might bring forth positive proof of what he took to be Santayana's deviancy.

W. H. Auden was intelligent enough to recognize him as no more than a latent homosexual and to despise Santayana for his asexual fastidiousness. Auden's review of *The Middle Span*, in the *New Yorker* of May 2, 1953, is replete with indignant whinnies and barbed asides. Remembering that Santayana had described Lytton Strachey as having obscenity written all over him and commenting on Santayana's disapproving account of how Strachey left an obscene book lying open in Lady Otteline

Morrel's drawing room, Auden comments, "Hoity-toity, Professor" (125). In one of the oddest remarks, Auden quotes him: "'To possess [things or persons] physically or legally,' writes Santayana, 'is a burden and a snare.' Quite so, but it is equally true that it is only through such possessions that most men can learn loyalty and responsibility" (127). At what point, one wonders, did Auden start teaching the saving graces of what Trotsky called "the bourgeois in its most repulsive phase: the acquisitive"? After pouring as much contempt as he can, while still holding his audience, Auden concludes with a shrill ejaculation: "You know, I don't think I really like him" (128). And Auden spoke for a growing number of poets and philosophers, scholars and intellectuals.

The most effective attack of all, however, was also one of the earliest. In the chapter on William James in his *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell spent a paragraph disposing of George Santayana: "His [James's] warm-heart-

edness and his delightful humor caused him to be almost universally beloved. The only man I know who did not feel any affection for him was Santayana, whose doctor's thesis William James had described as 'the perfection of rottenness'" (811). Russell continued castigating Santayana for several more sentences and then dropped him altogether, except for a passing reference. Those words may have gone further toward fixing Santayana's reputation with general readers and with casual students of philosophy than anything else ever said about him. Russell's *History* sold well when it appeared in 1945, and it remains in print, unrevised, to this day.

Russell's attack on Santayana is disguised as a defense of James, although he ends up with little good to say about James's philosophy either, and this tends to disarm partisans of Santayana. The effect of the attack is evident, for example, in what Randall Jarrell said in the introduction to William Carlos Williams's *Selected Poems*, published in 1949. Speaking of Williams, Jarrell said: "There is something particularly willing and generous about the man behind the poems: one is attracted to him so automatically that one is 'reminded of a story' of how S was defined as the only man in the universe who didn't like William James" (Jarrell x).

A quotation from a scholarly book published in the same year illustrates the animus felt toward Santayana by many American academics, a suspicion and dislike that Russell had come to share and that he did nothing to discourage: "[S]piritually ensconced in fourteenth century Rome as he was physically in fascist Rome, he [Santayana] leveled his scorn at all who supposed that

American culture could genuinely share in what seemed to him the true, great tradition in Europe" (Cady 25). Such hostility is not easy to reply to. One can only assert that Santayana was in his basic convictions closer to Spinoza and Lucretius than to Aquinas; that most of his friends were Americans; that he found much to praise in the American character; and that he was trapped in Rome by the war, having been refused entry to Switzerland because he still held a Spanish passport, seventy years after leaving Spain for the United States. In short, he is eminently defensible.

Santayana, as Russell certainly realized, inspired legends. For more than thirty years following his resignation of his chair at Harvard in 1912, he had become steadily more remote, enigmatic, and inaccessible as a person, even as his reputation as a poet, philosopher, and best-selling novelist became more pervasive and inescapable for his professional peers. Everyone talked about him, and few really knew him. Some of these anecdotal attributions were extraordinarily silly. It was said, for example, that he had walked out of his Harvard classroom one day, telling his students, "I have a rendezvous with the spring."

The truth was quite otherwise. The severing of his ties with Harvard were gradual and decorous: he submitted his resignation a year in advance, agreed to a negotiated additional half year of teaching at half salary, and only made his break final when he wrote to Abbott Lawrence Lowell from Paris explaining that the death of his mother had left him "without a home in Boston" and that this was a step that he had meditated on all his life (*Letters* 119). Yet that stultifying story continued to be told.

Another example, one that regained unwelcome currency when Santayana befriended young Robert Lowell and consequently got himself put into a poem, was his supposed saying "There is no God, and Mary is His mother." There is to this at least some warrant for this in Santayana's view of religion as a serious work of the human imagination. But it is a wag's witticism, dating from early in the century, and hardly works as a précis of Santayana's outlook. Even Lowell expressed regret at having perpetuated the myth in his poem.

Russell, whose connections with Santayana had lasted nearly a half-century, must have been aware, and rather tired, one suspects, of these bits of Santayaniana. Yet, without intending to do so, Russell promoted the longevity of one story, introducing his own misinformed version of the "perfection of rottenness" remark. It may be that no extended defense of Santayana against the implications of the phrase is really necessary. But so many have used the "perfection of rottenness" to sum up what they think wrong with Santayana, a misapplication second only to the comment about those "doomed to repeat" history, that it may provide a useful introduction to Santayana's personality and to

the misconceptions of it, if we examine carefully the genesis and history of the phrase.

Careless speculations about the phrase's history are common. Among the various inaccuracies, for example, is Sidney Hook's assertion:

> Santayana learned about James's judgment of him in 1919 when William James's son (Henry, III) published some of his father's letters. James's phrase "the perfection of rottenness," characterizing the standpoint of Santayana's *Life of Reason*, went to the quick of his *amour-propre*. From that time on Santayana realized, and expressed it in different ways, that even apart from temperamental differences he and William James were separated by a philosophical abyss. (qtd. in Myers 491)

As I shall show, this statement is incorrect on at least three points: James made the remark long before Santayana's writing of *The Life of Reason*, Santayana did not learn of the remark in this way, and he realized much earlier than this that there were great differences dividing him from James.

What is the true story about what James said? To start with, it had nothing to do with any "doctor's thesis." Santayana's dissertation, which remained unpublished until 1971 and mostly unread in a single handwritten copy in Widener Library, was on the philosophy of Rudolph Herman Lotze, whose cheering version of German transcendental philosophy seems to have been as agreeable to American theologians in that Darwin-haunted era as Agassiz's antievolutionary views in biology were. Why did Santayana write on Lotze? Because Josiah Royce thought that it would be healthier for him than if he chose Schopenhauer. What did James think of the dissertation? He not only approved it; he commended it. Writing to his wife, Alice, he said, "Last night, by the bye, we gave Santayana the degree of PH. D. His thesis is simply an exquisite production" (qtd. in Myers 35). There is already a little ambiguity in that word "exquisite," which is the sort of thing that Santayana's detractors also tend to say; but at this pointthough possibly playfully ironicit could hardly be thought pejorative. What, then, was Russell thinking of when he spoke of a "doctor's thesis" that James had condemned?

Years later, on April 2, 1900, William James was writing from the Chateau de Carqueiranne in southern France to George H. Palmer back in Cambridge. Santayana's *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* had just been published. Among other enthusiasms that bubble over in the letter, we find the following:

> The great event in my life recently has been the reading of Santayana's book. Although I absolutely reject the platonism of it, I have literally squealed with delight at the imperturbable perfection with which the position is laid down on page after page; and grunted

> with delight at such a thickening up of our Harvard atmosphere. (*Letters of William James* 122)

He continues in a rather more technical vein, using phrases quintessentially Jamesian to explain what benefits will accrue to the department of philosophy from the introduction of this exotic variety of thought:

> [T]hese are so many religions, ways of fronting life, and worth fighting for, [that] we should have a genuine philosophic universe at Harvard. The best condition of it would be an open conflict and rivalry of the diverse systems. (Alas! that I should be out of it, just as my chance begins!) The world might ring with the struggle, if we devoted ourselves exclusively to belaboring each other. (122)

It does not take much acquaintance with the thought and personality of Santayana to see that James's idea of a philosophical paradise must have been about as appealing to him as would, to Walter Pater, an invitation to join the Pente-

costal Holiness Church. The detachment, aloofness, fastidiousness, and calm rationality that irritated numerous more "committed" souls during his life hardly fitted Santayana for such rambunctious company. It is therefore all the stranger to find James continuing:

> I now understand Santayana, the man. I never understood him before. But what a perfection of rottenness in a philosophy! I don't think I ever knew the anti-realistic view to be propounded with so impudently superior an air. It is refreshing to see a representative of moribund Latinity rise up and administer such reproof to us barbarians in the hour of our triumph. (12223)

Further on, James tips his hand even more than usual, exclaiming:

> Bah! Give me Walt Whitman and Browning ten times over, much as the perverse ugliness of the latter at times irritates me, and intensely as I have enjoyed Santayana's attack. The barbarians are in the line of mental growth, and those who do insist that the ideal and real are dynamically continuous are those by whom the world is to be saved. But I'm nevertheless delighted that the other view, always existing in the world, should have found at last so splendidly impertinent an expression among ourselves. I have meant to write to Santayana; but on second thoughts, and to save myself, I will just ask you to send him this. (123)

James, it appears, rejoiced in Santayana's views because they were so wrong that they provided both James and God Almighty with something worth struggling against, to the greater glory of botha cosmic romantic egotism, the good-humored heartiness of which Santayana thoroughly appreciated. But he could not share it and could scarcely be expected to enjoy it when it included

such bruising expressions"moribund Latinity" as well as "rottenness."

James, I think, meant no real harm in speaking this way. He felt that his too-fastidious junior colleague could benefit from a little manly jostling. But he miscalculated in taking that tone with Santayana, who replied, opening with a reference to "your delightful letter."

> No doubt, as you say, Latinity is moribund, as Greece itself was when it transmitted to the rest of the world the seeds of its own rationalism; and for that reason there is the more need of transplanting and propagating straight thinking among the peoples who hope to be masters of the world in the immediate future. Otherwise they will be its physical masters only, and the Muses will fly over them to alight among some future race that may understand the Gods better. (*Letters* 62)

So the "perfection of rottenness" phrase originated in James's letter, and Santayana saw it within a couple of weeks and replied to it immediately; but how did Russell come to think that it had to do with a "doctor's thesis"?

In 1940, as I have mentioned, there appeared volume 2 in *The Library of Living Philosophers*, an ambitious and imposing series, the plan of which was to honor figures such as Whitehead, Russell, Croce, Bergson, Moore, and others with generous tomes containing their own summaries of their positions, commentaries by their most distinguished peers, and replies to the commentaries. Dewey's had come out the year before. Now it was Santayana's turn.

The reasons behind the hostility that shows itself in this collection are complex, involving a sense of betrayal or abandonment by American academics, a disdain for Santayana's lack of logical or epistemological rigor, a suspicion that he was entirely too comfortable living in Mussolini's Italy, resentment at his demolition of philosophic idealism, discomfort with his seeming aloofness, and much else, including, it must be said, envy of the wealth that came to him with the success of his novel and of the splendor of the deluxe edition of his works published by Scribner's. Be all that as it may, the attacks are astonishing. It is heartening to report that Santayana's self-defense was spirited and vigorous, forceful without rancor.

But how does Bertrand Russell figure in this? At the conclusion of his own piece on Santayana (in *The Philosophy of George Santayana*), Russell wrote:

> Santayana's general outlook is one which is not likely to be widely influential in America, because it is aristocratic, not only politically, but philosophically. . . . From a personal view, aloofness may be wiser philosophically, but the opposite attitude is a heritage of Christianity, and one which is essential to the survival of intelligence as a social force. ("Philosophy of Santayana" 474)

Reflections on the irony of Bertrand Russell in the role of Christian apologist aside, one may say that in most of the essay he seems to be fair to Santayana: "I will, to begin with, briefly state my own view of Santayana's system. To a certain extent, though not wholly, I am in agreement with it; it is exceptionally self-consistent; and I have no doubt that it is important" (454). But, as we just saw, he did conclude with a jab at his subject, and many years earlier, his views on moral philosophy had been decisively changed by Santayana. So we may be confident that he read Santayana's reply (in the same volume) carefully.

In the course of answering Russell, Santayana wrote: "William James was a romantic individualist, generously sympathising with cranks, weaklings, and impostors; they were entitled to prove themselves right, if they could, and to

blaze a trail through other people's gardens" ("Apologia" 583). And earlier in the 113-page "Apologia Pro Mente Sua," he had alluded to that unhappily memorable phrase: "For quite different reasons, my thesis about poetry and religion also made an unfavorable impression on William James, who declared it to be 'the perfection of rottenness'" (498). Remember that what James was referring to was *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, published in 1900.

Here is the source of Russell's misinformation! He misread *thesis* as referring to Santayana's doctoral dissertation, when, of course, Santayana meant the central theme or argument of his later book. Also, Russell concluded from what Santayana said about James that there was personal animosity between the two dating from Santayana's days as a graduate student. Now, of course, the phrase had stuck in Santayana's craw; he was to refer to it againand add to its currencyin the essay "My Friendly Critics": "For instance, when more than twenty years ago I wrote some *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, this is what William James said of them: 'What a perfection of rottenness . . . how fantastic a philosophy. . . .'" (*Soliloquies in England* 247).

Santayana resented what James said and his manner of communicating it; he was taking this occasion (in his reply to Russell in his "Apologia") to register his irritation. But Santayana, having made his feelings clear, proceeded briskly on: "Yet he [James] was no less quick in generously revising his judgments than in first forming them. Soon, when the first two volumes of *The Life of Reason* appeared, he stopped me one day in the street, aglow with encouragementa paternally humorous

encouragement such as athletic English dons shout to their pupils in a race." After their talk ended they "parted laughing and in the best of humor" (499).

Is this the language of an embittered and resentful former student and excolleague? A hostile critic could argue that Santayana was merely covering his animosity with a display of good humor. A more kindly view might be that the honest exhibition of justifiable resentment guarantees Santayana's fundamental friendliness. There was much in James's thought and manner with which he could not sympathize; he did not approve of James's rambling extemporaneousness (in person, on the lecture platform, and in his writings), and he considered James's tolerance for cranky points of view as a tacit encouragement of egotism. Russell was certainly correct in sensing a resentment in Santayana at having been forcedat least in James's own mindto play a role that he did not feel suited him, a resentment at James's determination to see him as a certain sort of person and as representing certain kinds of views. In the essay on James in *Character and Opinion*, Santayana expressed an abundance of reservationsquarreling posthumously with him as with a departed father. Mentor, sponsor,

father figure: no one can deny that James was all these things to Santayana, and for just that reason he felt it necessary to distance himself from James. Yet the concluding sentences of the essay are nothing if not affectionate:

> But in the midst of this routine of the class-room the spirit would sometimes come upon him, and, leaning his head on his hand, he would let fall golden words, picturesque, fresh from the heart, full of the knowledge of good and evil. Incidentally there would crop up some humorous characterisation, some candid confession of doubt or of instinctive preference, some pungent scrap of learning; radicalisms plunging sometimes into the sub-soil of all human philosophies; and, on occasion, thoughts of simple wisdom and wistful piety, the most unfeigned and manly that anybody ever had. (96)

To return to Russell, the question then is: What reasons could he have had to take so dim a view of Santayana's relation to James? Russell really believed that they were at odds; Daniel Cory, Santayana's amanuensis and biographer, reports that Russell told him, "I'm afraid that James was altogether too much for Santayana" (Cory 42).

The unpleasant explanation may be that Russell had begun to succumb, all too humanly, to the temptation of diminishing the stature of a person to whom he owed obligations that he could never repay, and that one method he chose was to represent Santayana and James as enemies. To say this is not so much to accuse Russell of malice as of forgetfulnessor even of an earnest attempt to keep the record straight in spite of any personal obligations that he might be under.

But what were these obligations that weighed on Russell?

Back in 1911, Santayana had published three essays in separate numbers of the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, all of which were on Russell's recent writings. Up to that time, Russell had shared with G. E. Moore a view of moral values that assigned such values an objective existence comparable to that of mathematical proofs or laws of physics. Russell had believedto state it rather too simplythat if two people disagreed as to whether something was good or bad, only one of them could be correct. Santayana answered him at length and with such pungent arguments as this:

> For the human system whiskey is truly more intoxicating than coffee, and the contrary opinion would be an error; but what a strange way of vindicating this real, though relative, distinction, to insist that whiskey is more intoxicating in itself, without reference to any animal; that it is pervaded, as it were, by an inherent intoxication and stands dead drunk in its bottle.

> Yet just in this way Mr. Russell and Mr. Moore conceive things to be dead good and dead bad. (*Winds of Doctrine* 146)

In his extreme old ageas he had earlierRussell continued to acknowledge his debt, admitting that "when I was young, I agreed with G. E. Moore in believing in the objectivity of good and evil. Santayana's criticism, (collected in 1913) in a book called *Winds of Doctrine,* caused me to abandon this view, though I have never been able to be as bland and comfortable without it as he was" (*Portraits from Memory* 96). At the time that Russell wrote those words, Santayana was dead and in no position to express himself as to the degree of his responsibility for Russell's moral outlook. My point, however, is that Russell admitted having had his views changed in an important way by Santayana, while Santayana had been quite untouched by Russell.

Russell's indebtedness was even more literal in one way. In 1937 his fortunes had sunk quite low. The notoriety of his private life and his public views had prevented an appointment to Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, and Harvard did not renew an offer that he had been forced to turn down six years before. His obligations for alimony and child support were several times his current income. Santayana, upon hearing about this and being flush with the receipts of his best-selling novel, arranged an indirect transfer of money to support Russellan amount equal in value, in current dollars, to about $50,000 a year. In one of the few errors in his otherwise exemplary biography of Santayana, John McCormick wrote, speaking of the remarks in the *History of Western Philosophy*: "Russell remained ignorant of his benefactor, and his benefactor clearly

felt as though Russell had bitten the hand that fed him" (McCormick 373). The truth is that Russell *did* know; in a letter to Ottoline Morrell late in 1937, he wrote: "The source is anonymous but the anonymity is very thin. It *is* good of Santayana" (qtd. in Clark 456). Russell did know and yet composed the slighting passages in his *History* anyway.

Later on, when Russell came to write his own autobiography, he made no mention whatever of the help he had received in 1937 and had little to say about Santayana in any connection. Aside from the normal human reluctance to admit dependence on the favors of others"Hard is it," wrote Dante, "to go up and down another man's stairs"it must have been especially hard for the world-renowned logician, coauthor of the *Principia Mathematica*, British peer, and winner of the Nobel prize for literature to remember that he had ever had to subsist on handouts from one whom someone else had calledin another expression of nonadmirationa "dainty, unassimilated man," a person whom Russell thought of as a medieval Scholastic.

There were other things to make Russell uncomfortable with Santayana. There had been the long and curious friendship with Russell's older brother, Frank, through whom Santayana first met "Bertie." Santayana had even become involved in some of the legal complications surrounding Frank's scandalous marital problems. As we have seen, Frank Russell appears in *The Last Puritan*, much-transformed, as Lord Jim, the yacht skipper for Oliver Alden's father, a man of great animal vitality but with a shady, possibly criminal, personal history. To this day, there are scandalmongers and apologists for gay rights who wish to believe that a physically realized homosexual relationship existed between Santayana and the elder Russell brother.

On a different level, there was Bertrand Russell's feeling that much of Santayana's philosophy was insubstantial, especially his central concern with essences. Most efforts at summarizing what Santayana meant by the word *essence* do nothing but lend support to Russell's notion of them.

Finally, there were innumerable differences of habit, temperament, and preference that make the two philosophers a study in contrasts: Russellrestless, committed, sexually active, and practical, a pamphleteer, publicist, politician, and logician; and Santayanaaloof, fastidious, and detached, who referred to sex as "the cult of Venus," preferred the contemplative life, was lamentably unaware of many political realities, and was as much a theologian as anything else.

It would be pleasant to report that the old enemies and even older friends had made up their differences as they continued into their eighth and, in Russell's case, ninth decades of lifein Russell's

phrase, assemblies of organic chemicals resisting dissolution. What happened, however, was not pleasant.

Trapped in Rome by the war and rapidly losing the weight he had gained during what had been, for him, the prosperous 1930s, Santayana set to work on his autobiography. The first volume was smuggled out by Padraic Colum and published by Scribner's, selling well to a wartime public during a period when Faulkner went completely out of print. It is the third and last volume, entitled *My Host the World*, that concerns us. It was not published until 1953, following Santayana's death and without his having had a chance to remove passages that might have been found offensive by living readers. Given Russell's advanced age then, he may not have been expected to live long enough to read it. But read it he did, and what he found was not agreeable.

Santayana starts out pleasantly enough: "Of all my friends, of all persons belonging at all to my world, Bertrand Russell was the most distinguished. He had birth, genius, learning, indefatigable zeal and energy, brilliant intelligence, and absolute honesty and courage. His love of justice was as keen as his sense

of humor." But after heaping other honorifics on his former friend, Santayana concludes: "Yet on the whole, relative to his capacities, he was a failure. He petered out. He squandered his time and energy, and even his money, on unworthy objects" (*My Host the World* 2627).

Now, philosophers are forever implying one another's ultimate failure. Aristotle said as much about Plato, and Whitehead said that Santayana failed of achieving real stature because of what Whitehead called his lack of sincerity. Russell, who managed to keep an amused distance from most human foibles, could probably have stomached this. But in the next paragraph of *My Host the World*, Santayana turned to Russell as a physical manifestation:

> In his physique he was a complete contrast to his brother, a Russell while his brother was a Stanley. Bertie was small, dark, brisk, with a lively air and a hyena laugh. According to some people he was the ugliest man they had ever seen. But I didn't find him ugly, because his mask, though grotesque, was expressive and engaging. You saw that he was a kind monster, that if he spit fire, it was a *feu-de-joie*. (27)

How do we know that Russell read this? He may have seen these sentences quoted in *Time* magazine's review of the book. It could not have helped repair their friendship for him to read them or to hear them reported to him. But he must have seen them either in the original book or in *Time* because, in the essay on Santayana in *Portraits from Memory*, we find: "He wrote an autobiography in several parts, which is chiefly interesting as exhibiting the clash between his Spanish temperament and his Boston environment" (97). Such a gratuitous and willful

misrepresentation of those books might indicate that Russell read no further than the first volumethe only one to which the remark could possibly apply. But that he got into volume 2, *The Middle Span*, is proved by a reference (in Russell's essay) to an incident in which Santayana accidentally dunked Frank Russell in a canal. Are we to suppose that Bertie stopped reading before he got to the part about himself?

The most likely way to account for the unrelieved acerbity and malice of Russell's parting comments on Santayana (in *Portraits from Memory*) is to see them as an answer to the passages in *My Host the World*, the final volume of the autobiography, which Santayana could not have supposed that Russell would ever see. Here are a few samples, all of which served to reinforce the prejudices then emerging (in 1953) against Santayana; all these appear in the course of a few pages of Russell's *Portraits from Memory*:

> He could admit into the realms of his admirations the ancient Greeks and the modern Italians, even Mussolini. . . .
>
> One evening in Cambridge, after I had been seeing him every day for some time, he remarked to me: "I am going to Seville tomorrow. I wish to be in a place where people do not restrain their passions." I suppose this attitude is not surprising in one who had few passions to restrain. . . .
>
> I think that he and St. Thomas, if they could have met, would have understood each other very well. . . .
>
> . . . He completely ignored modern logic. [This Russell thought of himself and Whitehead as having reformed, and as an essential philosophic concern.] . . .
>
> . . . I find myself, in reading him, approving each sentence in a somnambulistic manner, but quite unable, after a few pages, to remember what it was all about. . . .
>
> . . . Aloofness and facile contempt were his defects, and because of them, although he could be admired, he was a person whom it was difficult to love. (9397)

Unfortunately, in some quarters these views are received opinion on Santayana. Whatever his contributions in other directions and however admirable may have been his going to prison or losing his university fellowship for his pacifist views in World War I, Russell is not reliable about Santayana. In support of this contention, I quote one additional sentence from *Portraits from Memory*, in which Russell reminds us how Santayana fit into the galaxy of philosophers contained in his earlier *History*: "William James condemned his doctor's thesis as 'the perfection of rottenness.'" (94) We could accept everything else as honest, if

acerbic, opinion, but in this case Russell hasaccidentally, I thinkdone what Swift's Houyhnhnms called "saying the thing that was not."

Santayana, whose appreciation of other points of view exceeded Russell's, said, "If there were no absolute truth, all inclusive and eternal, the desultory views taken from time to time by individuals would themselves be absolute" (*Realm of Truth* viii). We cannot allow Russell this form of absolutism; we must dismiss the whole affair as an unfortunate and largely one-sided quarrel, relative only to Russell.

Am I making too much of what Russell said? It is easy to find evidence of the effect of Russell's opinions. Frederick A. Olafson delivered a paper at the memorial meeting for Santayana at Harvard University on January 30, 1953. What he said was, on the whole, reverent and complimentary. But he also felt the need to balance the encomiums with exaggerations and misrepresentations:

> [H]e seemed, for all his materialism, to disjoin experience and any kind of objective world of things in an impossible way; he was no great respecter of science, of which indeed he was by his own admission almost entirely ignorant; and besides he wrote rather too well to be entirely reliable. One recalls William James's remark to the effect that Santayana's doctoral thesis was a "perfection of rottenness"; and in spite of the lip-service that is done to him, I think the more common view is that Santayana's way of doing philosophy was loose, literary, and more or less irresponsible and that its destructive criticism of science and human knowledge, generally, was a malicious one. (43)

Delivered on the same occasion and printed in the same journal was a short speech by C. I. Lewis, in which he said:

> It wassuch is my impressionprimarily a spectator mind, enjoying the spectacle of human life and finding satisfaction in contemplation, but one which at the same time maintained a certain psychic distance from the drama so viewed, preserving always an inner integrity immune to these episodes, and its own indefeasible privacy. (31)

Again, in the same journal, appears a paper by Donald C. Williams that is genuinely complimentary and that attempts to defend Santayana from the attitudes toward him that had begun to emerge. But in so doing, Williams could not help but reveal what other people were saying and thinkingexpressing it better than most of those could. This was read at the symposium on Santayana at Harvard on December 29, 1953.

> The nacre of his prose, precious with a sanity so polished as to seem more morbid than another man's madness, his skeptical reserve toward the contingencies of existence and his remote aristocratic gaze on the picture gallery of essencesall these have endeared him to

> esthetes and positivists and to various other fine urban breeds who read in him their own gospel of disillusion and dissolution, while they correspondingly have alienated us peasant souls who think life is real and earnest and that things are more than what they seem. . . . He saw his philosophy as delayed and damaged by his having been miseducated in New England, and it is well advertised that he turned his back on her to dwell with the ancient "dignity" of RomeSwiss Guards, Black Shirts, and all. (3133)

To support that last remark, Williams even provides a footnote referring to an article in *Time* magazine, March 9, 1953; however, nothing in that article warrants what Williams said. But others were certainly saying it.

The original practice of ostracism involved banishing for a ten-year period

a person who was not necessarily of extraordinary wickedness, but who had been talked about too frequently and who seemed to exercise an inordinate influence on civic affairs. I would argue that these attacks on Santayana's person and his philosophy were an ostracism that was largely the consequence of his having been as prominent as he was in the period 192045. Not only did the literate public quote him, often out of contexta practice that continues to this daynot only did his unusual career provide a lot of scholarly gossip, but two books of his had been distributed by the Book-of-the-Month Club and the deluxe Triton edition of all his works had been published by Scribner's. By 1950 he had been a published author, usually with several books currently in print, for sixty-four consecutive years. Perhaps his celebrity became tiresome to his peers.

And philosophical fashions changed dramatically after 1945. The notion of the Emersonian sage gave way to that of the logicist, absorbed in cruelly encrypted symbols of a consistency that was more diabolical than hobgoblin-like. Sartre and Camus were heroes; existentialism throve to the point that taxi drivers in Paris would curse an errant motorist, "*Espèce d'existentialiste*!" The world seemed ready for Santayana's departurebut he lingered on, and his host began to display increasing impatience and bad manners. After his death, as often happens when a dominant figure disappears, there was a conspiracy of silence; few pieces about him appeared, and those were often unfriendly.

The later 1980s saw a revival of interest and sympathy, though some reviews of John McCormick's definitive and distinguished biography, published in 1987, betrayed lingering prejudices.

There are many who simply cannot contemplate with equanimity the prospect of skeptical reserve; one sees the same thing in reviewers who attack biographies of Thomas Hardy. The suspicion that Santayana is not "one of us"that he deliberately distanced himself not only from ordinary humanity, but also from various elite, elect, or minority constituencies, ranging from the Harvard faculty to the homosexual communitycontinues to inspire reciprocation of this imagined disdain.

Even within the community of philosophers, if there is such a thing, he has made himself an outcast by his very catholicityor eclecticism. Western philosophy has usually been controversial, sectarian, and often enough adversarial; by setting himself against what some now call "exceptionalism," by denying that there is one privileged point of view, Santayana has made himself more enemies than friends. Criticism of his philosophy often identifies it with some earlier school or tendency, ranging, astonishingly, from Platonism to atomism, and from Scholasticism to materialism or Leibnitzian monadism. Even more astonishing is that his critics are in part correct; it is all there, but his purpose was to cull from each school whatever is most valuable for the attainment of a

balanced vieweven when he draws on a school antithetic to this very catholicity. Such disengaged eclecticism is the philosophical parallel to the personal aloofness. I have examined the ingredients of Santayana's *pot-pourri* with the hope of showing that the perfection of rottenness may consist not in a delight in putrefaction, but rather in the common-sense salvaging of usable leftovers.

Appendix

Works Cited

Index

Appendix:
An Unpublished Letter

c/o Brown Shipley & Co.
123, Pall Mall, London, S. W. 1
Rome, March 20, 1936

Dear Mr. Gross

The reason for calling Oliver the "last puritan" is given in the *Prologue*. He had reached the ultimate phase of puritanism, when it condemns itself. That doesn't kill it, but it kills the man who has it. Of course, most modern descendants of the Puritans, with some remnant of superstitious conscience, become ordinary business men and hardly less robust socially than other peoplemore robust than their historical enemies the Anglican Catholics. But Oliver is meant not to be a puritan by accident only or by inheritance, but by nature. And he "peters" out because his austerity rejects the ordinary religious and moral shams that satisfy most idealistic souls, while at the same time he can't identify himself with the life of the world. He is like the rich young man in the Gospel who turns away sadly: not in this case because he wasn't ready to sell all he had and give to the poor, but because he found no Christ to follow.

It is very true that the reviews (at least those I have seen) are not well-rounded or fairly focussed. Although many of them, like yours, are extremely flattering. The book is too complex, and some of the strains in it not easy to discuss openly. But I wanted

at least to suggest everything that had seemed to me to contribute to the dissolution of this moral type.

Yours sincerely,
G. Santayana

From a letter in the private collection of Samuel Wheeler. Reprinted with permission from George Santayana, *The Letters of George Santayana* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, forthcoming).

Works Cited

Works by Santayana

Lotze's System of Philosophy. Diss. Harvard U, 1889. Ed. and introd. Paul Grimley Kuntz. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1971.

The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outlines of Aesthetic Theory. New York: Scribner's, 1896.

Interpretations of Poetry and Religion. 1900. New York: Scribner's, 1921.

Introduction. *Ethics* and *De Intellectus Emendatione*. By Benedict de Spinoza. New York: Dutton, 1910. vii-xxii.

Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1910.

Winds of Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Opinion. 1913. New York: Scribner's, 1926.

Egotism in German Philosophy. 1916. New York: Haskell House, 1971.

Character and Opinion in the United States, with Reminiscences of William James and Josiah Royce and Academic Life in America. New York: Scribner's, 1920.

Reason in Society. Vol. 2 of *The Life of Reason*. New York: Scribner's, 1921.

Reason in Religion. Vol. 3 of *The Life of Reason*. New York:

Scribner's, 1921.

Reason in Art. Vol. 4 of *The Life of Reason*. New York: Scribner's, 1921.

Reason in Science. Vol. 5 of *The Life of Reason*. New York: Scribner's, 1921.

Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies. New York: Scribner's, 1922.

Scepticism and Animal Faith: Introduction to a System of Philosophy. New York: Scribner's, 1923.

Dialogues in Limbo. New York: Scribner's, 1925.

Platonism and the Spiritual Life. New York: Scribner's, 1927.

The Realm of Essence: Book First of "Realms of Being." New York: Scribner's, 1927.

"A Brief History of My Opinions." 1930. Rpt. as pt. 1 of "A General Confession" in Schilpp, *Philosophy* 1-21.

The Realm of Matter: Book Second of "Realms of Being." New York: Scribner's, 1930.

The Last Puritan: A Memoir in the Form of a Novel. New York: Scribner's, 1936.

Obiter Scripta: Lectures, Essays and Reviews. Ed. Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz. New York: Scribner's, 1936.

The Philosophy of Santayana: Selections from the Works of George Santayana. Ed. and intord. Irwin Edman. 1936. New York: Modern Library, 1942.

The Works of George Santayana. (Triton Ed.) 15 vols. New

York: Scribner's, 1936-40.

The Realm of Truth: Book Third of "Realms of Being." New York: Scribner's, 1938.

"Apologia Pro Mente Sua." 1940. Schilpp, *Philosophy* 495-605.

"A General Confession." 1940. Schilpp, *Philosophy* 1-30.

The Realm of Spirit: Book Fourth of "Realms of Being." New York: Scribner's, 1940.

Realms of Being. (4 vols. in 1 vol.) New York: Scribner's, 1942.

Persons and Places: The Background of My Life. New York: Scribner's, 1944.

The Middle Span. Vol. 2 of *Persons and Places*. New York: Scribner's, 1945.

The Idea of Christ in the Gospels: Or, God in Man, a Critical Essay. New York: Scribner's, 1946.

Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty, Society, and Government. New York: Scribner's, 1951.

My Host the World. Vol. 3 of *Persons and Places*. New York: Scribner's, 1953.

The Life of Reason: Or, The Phases of Human Progress. Rev. ed. New York: Scribner's, 1954.

Letters. Ed. Daniel Cory. New York: Scribner's, 1955.

The Idler and His Works, and Other Essays. Ed. Daniel Cory. New York: Braziller, 1957.

Some Turns of Thought in Modern Philosophy: Five Essays. Freeport: Books for Libraries P. 1967.

Selected Critical Writings of George Santayana. Ed. Norman Henfrey. London: Cambridge UP, 1968.

Physical Order and Moral Liberty: Previously Unpublished Essays of George Santayana. Ed. John and Shirley Lachs. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1969.

The Complete Poems of Santayana: A Critical Edition. Ed. William G. Holzberger. Cranbury: Assoc. UP, 1979.

Persons and Places: Fragments of Autobiography. Ed. William G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp Jr. Critical ed.

Cambridge: MIT P, 1986.

The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outlines of Aesthetic Theory. Ed. William G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp Jr. Introd. Arthur C. Danto. Critical ed. Cambridge: MIT P, 1988.

The Last Puritan: A Memoir in the Form of a Novel. Ed. William G. Holzaberger and Herman J. Saatkamp Jr. Introd. Irving Singer. Critical ed. Cambridge: MIT P, 1994. (Parenthetical citations to this edition are given in brackets.)

Other Works

Arnett, Willard Eugene. *George Santayana*. New York: Washington Square P, 1968.

Arnett, Willard Eugene. *Santayana and the Sense of Beauty*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1955.

Auden, W. H. "Through the Collarbone of a Hare." *New Yorker* 2 May 1953: 120-28.

Ayer, A. J. *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Random, 1982.

Brownell, Baker. "Santayana: The Man and the Philosopher." Schilpp, *Philosophy* 33-61.

Butler, Richard. *The Mind of Santayana*. Chicago: Regnery, 1955.

Cady, Edwin Harrison. *The Gentleman in America*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1949.

Clark, Ronald William. *The Life of Bertrand Russell*. New York: Knopf, 1976.

Copleston, Frederick Charles. *A History of Philosophy*. Vol. 8.

Garden City: Image Books, 1962.

Cory, Daniel. *Santayana, The Later Years: A Portrait with Letters*. Ed. William G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp Jr. New York: Braziller, 1963.

Cowley, Malcolm. "Santayana in Society." *New Republic* 30 April 1945: 591-92.

Eastman, Max. "Philosopher in a Convent." *American Mercury* Nov. 1951: 35-40.

Eastman, Max. "Sex and Santayana: New Light on the Mind and Opinions of the Famous Thinker." *American Mercury* Jan. 1952: 72-79.

Edman, Irwin. "Humanism and Post-Humanism in the Philosophy of Santayana." Schilpp, *Philosophy* 295-312.

Fuller, B. A. G. *A History of Philosophy*. Rev. ed. New York: Holt, 1945.

Howgate, George Washburne. *George Santayana*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1938.

James, William. *Collected Essays and Reviews*. New York: Longmans, 1920.

James, William. *The Letters of William James.* Vol. 2. Ed. Henry James. Boston: Atlantic Monthly, 1920.

James, William. *Pragmatism*. New York: Longmans, 1940.

James, William. *Some Problems of Philosophy: A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy*. New York: Longmans, 1911.

Jarrell, Randall. Introduction. *Selected Poems*. By W. C. Williams. New York: New Directions, 1949.

Lachs, John. *George Santayana*. Boston: Twayne, 1988.

Langer, Susanne K. *An Introduction to Symbolic Logic*. 2d ed. New York: Dover, 1953.

Levinson, Henry S. *Santayana, Pragmatism, and the Spiritual Life*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1992.

Lewis, C. I. "Santayana at Harvard." *Journal of Philosophy* 51.2 (1954): 29-31.

Malcolm, Norman. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*. 2d ed. New

York: Oxford UP, 1984.

McCormick, John. *George Santayana: A Biography*. New York: Knopf, 1987.

Munitz, Milton K. "Ideals and Essences in Santayana's Philosophy." Schilpp, *Philosophy* 185-215.

Munsterberg, Margarete Anna Adelheid. "Santayana at Cambridge." *American Mercury* Jan. 1924: 69-74.

Myers, Gerald E. *William James*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986.

Olafson, Frederick A. "Scepticism and Animal Faith." *Journal of Philosophy* 51.2 (1954): 42-46.

Pearson, Karl. *The Grammar of Science*. 3d ed. London: Black, 1911.

Rice, Philip Blair. "The Philosopher as Poet and Critic." Schilpp, *Philosophy* 265-91.

Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy*. New York: Simon, 1945.

Russell, Bertrand. "The Philosophy of Santayana." Schilpp, *Philosophy* 453-74.

Russell, Bertrand. *Portraits from Memory*. New York: Simon, 1956.

Saatkamp, Herman J., Jr., and John Jones. *George Santayana: A Bibliographical Checklist, 1880-1980*. Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, Bowling Green State U, 1982.

Schilpp, Paul Arthur, ed. *The Philosophy of George Santayana*. Lib. of Living Philosophers 2. Evanston: Northwestern UP,

1940.

Schilpp, Paul Arthur, ed. "Santayana on *The Realm of Spirit.*" Schilpp, *Philosophy* 379-98.

Singer, Irving. *Santayana's Aesthetics: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1957.

Sperry, Willard. *Religion in America*. 1946. Boston: Beacon, 1963.

Sprigge, Timothy L. S. *Santayana: An Examination of His Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1974.

Stallknecht, Newton Phelps. *George Santayana*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1971.

Sullivan, Celestine J. "Santayana's Philosophical Inheritance." Schilpp, *Philosophy* 65-91.

Vivas, Eliseo. "From *The Life of Reason* to *The Last Puritan*." Schilpp, *Philosophy* 315-50.

Wang, Hao. *Beyond Analytic Philosophy*. Cambridge: MIT P, 1985.

Wang, Hao. *From Mathematics to Philosophy*. New York: Humanities P, 1974.

Wang, Hao. *Popular Lectures on Mathematical Logic*. New York: Reinhold, 1981.

Whitehead, Alfred North. *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead, as Recorded by Lucien Price*. Boston: Little, 1954.

Williams, Donald C. "Of Essence and Existence and Santayana." *Journal of Philosophy* 51.2 (1954): 31-34.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan, 1973.

Woodward, Anthony. *Living in the Eternal: A Study of George Santayana*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1988.

Index

A

Abbot, Henry Ward, 27, 28, 132

Agassiz, Louis, 183

Alden, Oliver (protagonist of *The Last Puritan*), xii, 40, 43, 88, 114, 116, 117, 119;

alienation of spirit from flesh, 125-27, 135, 149;

as an athlete, 127, 137, 164;

meets Caleb Weatherbee, 133, 150, 151;

and Catholicism, 140, 150, 151;

education of, 125-27, 137, 144, 146, 147, 164, 165;

and Emerson, 154, 155, 164;

Fräulein Irma and, 123-25, 128, 144;

and German philosophy, 144, 145, 147-49, 163-65, 167;

and Goethe, 125, 151, 152, 165, 167;

relations with "Lord Jim" Darnley, 128, 130, 133-35, 150, 151, 155, 163, 164;

compared to Mario, 119, 131, 136, 137;

considers marriage, 135, 164, 167;

models for, 116-19;

relations with parents, 120, 122, 124, 125, 150, 151;

and Protestantism, 140, 141, 150;

puritanism of, 119, 122, 124, 126, 129, 132, 139, 140, 149, 150, 160, 164, 165;

similarity to Santayana, 127, 128, 131, 134-37, 147, 149, 165;

and sexuality, 128-30, 134, 135, 167;

and the Vicar of Iffley, 154, 160, 166

Alden, Peter (character in *The Last Puritan*, father of Oliver), 118, 120-22, 125, 128, 130, 132, 133, 135, 136, 141-43, 149, 150, 152, 156, 162, 163

analytic philosophy, 170-72

Anaxagoras, 107

"animal faith," Santayana's term, 14, 70, 72, 80, 109, 129, 174

Aquinas, St. Thomas, x, 6, 11, 25, 174, 181, 191

Aristotle, 7, 11, 20, 23-25, 27, 54, 71, 72, 95, 105, 109, 114, 154, 190

Arnett, Willard, 12, 27

attention, Santayana's term, 3, 13-15, 31, 50, 60, 65, 95, 147, 148

Auden, W. H., 9, 129, 169, 175, 180

Augustine, St., 11, 18, 153

Avicenna, 11

Avila, Santayana's life in and connections with, xi, 84, 87, 92, 93, 101, 103, 104

Ayer, A. J., 54, 170

B

Bacon, Francis, 7, 65

Bergson, Henri, 11, 185

Berkeley, George, 15, 16

Bohr, Niels, 7, 8

Boston, in Santayana's life and novel, 13, 68, 82, 84-86, 91, 92, 100, 121, 124, 128, 141, 148, 182, 190

Brentano, Franz, 24

Breughel, Pieter, the Elder, 36

Bridges, Robert, 135

British empiricism, Santayana's view of, 13, 16, 140, 141, 162, 170

Brownell, Baker, 29, 30, 128

Browning, Robert, 88, 91, 122, 123, 174, 184

Burke, Edmund, 94, 95

Bush, Douglas, 86

Butler, Richard, x, 12

Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 19, 127, 130, 131

C

Camus, Albert, 73, 193

Carnap, Rudolph, 8, 31, 170

Chaplin, Charlie, 158

Chaucer, Geoffrey, 22, 24

Colum, Padraic, 189

Cory, Daniel, 47, 48, 57, 58, 61, 62, 71, 83, 87, 90, 127, 129, 137, 150, 158, 176, 187, 189

Cowley, Malcolm, 178, 179

Crane, Hart, 154

critical realism, 24, 173

D

Dante Alighieri, 11, 25, 40, 42, 47, 62, 75, 96, 116, 137, 141, 158, 159, 161, 188

Darnley, Jim ("Lord Jim," character in *The Last Puritan*), 116, 128-35, 149-56, 163, 164, 166, 167, 189

Darwin, Charles, 183

Democritus, 11, 30, 43, 105-7, 157

Derrida, Jacques, 170

Descartes, René, 4, 7, 11, 19, 31, 38, 71, 77, 106, 110, 158, 162

Dewey, John, 97, 146, 174, 185

Dreiser, Theodore, 115

E

Eastman, Max, 179, 180

Eddington, Sir Arthur Stanley, 70

Edman, Irwin, 175, 176

Einstein, Albert, 7, 25, 63, 64, 73, 76

Eliot, Charles W., 91, 173

Eliot, T. S., 11, 82, 169

Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 1, 11, 42, 80, 86, 102, 121, 149, 154, 155, 164, 193

Epicurus, 11, 39, 95, 107, 126, 129, 130, 142, 143, 150, 152, 157, 163, 175

essence, Santayana's theory and term, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 20-24, 26, 43, 44, 46, 49-66, 70-75, 77-79, 95-97, 101, 109, 110, 112, 119, 124, 129, 136, 148, 159, 171, 177, 178, 189, 192;

definiteness of, 15, 16, 52, 64;

infinite in number, 5, 22, 44, 49-51, 53, 55-59, 62, 71, 72, 74, 79, 96;

attributed by Santayana to William James, 15;

largely missing from *The Last Puritan*, 148;

nonexistence of, 5-7, 12, 15, 43, 59;

Bertrand Russell on, 57, 58, 129, 189

exceptionalism, 156, 193

existence, Santayana's critique of assumptions about, 5-7, 14, 21, 22, 28, 38, 50, 51, 55, 56, 65, 69, 70, 77, 78, 105, 106, 109, 110, 146, 152

existentialism, 157, 170, 172, 193

F

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 4, 11

Flaubert, Gustave, 3

flux, Santayana's term, 17, 18, 23, 33, 37, 46, 64, 67, 69-71, 74, 77, 78, 95, 96, 101, 104-9, 111, 147

Frost, Robert, 179

G

Galileo Galilei, 24

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 11, 29, 39-43, 45, 88, 123, 125, 145, 146, 151, 152, 159, 165, 167

grammar, Santayana's term, 3, 49, 165, 171

H

Harvard University, 2, 11, 13, 20, 26, 27, 50, 57, 83, 84, 86, 87, 90-92, 95, 97, 101, 104, 117, 120, 121, 127, 129,

133, 136, 137, 143, 151, 164, 165, 172, 173, 179-81, 183, 188, 191

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 4, 11, 19, 23, 56, 108

Heraclitus, 11, 64

Hobbes, Thomas, 4, 11, 17, 34, 147

Holzberger, William G., ix

Homer, 11, 78, 113, 115

Hook, Sidney, 182

Howells, William Dean, 3, 115

Howgate, George W., 12

Hume, David, 11, 16

Husserl, Edmund, 9, 24

hypostasize, Santayana's term, 3, 49, 97

I

idealism, philosophical, 2, 17, 40, 43, 53, 67, 70, 76, 80, 81, 99, 105, 110, 111, 141, 145, 147, 158, 161, 162, 170, 185

Ionic philosophy, 4, 9, 107, 149, 153

Irma, Fräulein (character in *The Last Puritan*), 88, 116, 123, 125, 128, 130, 136, 144-47, 167

J

Jackson, Henry, 20, 22

James, Henry, 3, 115

James, William, 9, 11, 13-17, 34, 49, 52, 90, 95, 97, 102, 108, 109, 120-22, 128, 142, 146, 147, 156, 161, 169, 171, 172, 174, 180-87, 191, 192;

values abnormal points of view, 13, 15, 172, 186;

idea of consciousness, 14;

at Harvard, 13;

possible model for Peter Alden, 120-22;

Bertrand Russell on, 14, 180, 181, 186, 187, 191;

contrasted with Santayana, 14-16, 95, 97, 102, 108, 109, 142, 182;

personal relations

with Santayana, 90, 156, 161, 172, 182-84, 187;

Santayana's view of, 146, 185, 186;

similarities of views to Santayana's, 14-17, 34, 52, 109, 147, 171;

view of Santayana, 13, 183-86

Johnson, Lionel, 89, 100, 101, 135

Johnson, Samuel, 3, 78, 134

Jonson, Ben, 1

Joyce, James, 11

K

Kant, Immanuel, x, 3, 4, 11, 12, 19, 43, 99, 106, 145, 164, 174

Kuntz, Paul Grimley, 53

L

Lachs, John, ix, 27, 177

Langer, Suzanne K., 10

Last Puritan, The:

relation to American realism, 3, 115, 146;

American transcendentalism criticized in, 154;

as criticism of American values, 125, 126, 128, 139, 140, 143, 146, 147, 163;

Byronic figures in, 119, 130;

Caleb Weatherbee explained, 133;

and Calvinism, 141;

and Catholicism, 123, 124, 127, 133, 140, 150, 151, 158;

models for characters in, 117, 120-22, 128-31, 137, 139;

view of England and the English in, 135, 136, 154;

theory of essence not found in, 148;

compared to other works of fiction, 119, 137;

German philosophy criticized in, 123, 145-47, 149, 167;

exemplification of philosophical points of view by characters, 39, 120;

Jim Darnley as prerational morality, 132, 133;

male physicality, 131, 134;

Mario's Mediterranean personality vs. Oliver's puritanism, 136, 137;

estrangement of body and spirit in Oliver, 131, 132, 136, 138, 140, 144, 149;

source of Oliver's name, 132;

and Protestantism, 152;

reception by readers, 118;

as a display of Santayana's own spirit, xii, 117, 118, 120, 122, 129, 131-33, 135, 136, 153, 164;

as a reflection of Santayana's life, 88, 118-20, 123-30, 132-

34, 136, 137;

as a reflection of Santayana's views, 118, 123;

Santayana as character in his own novel, 137, 139, 140, 164;

Schopenhauer mentioned in, 147;

views on sex, 134, 135;

Spinoza's philosophy evident in, 139, 143, 144, 146, 153, 155, 156;

symbolism of names in, 142, 143;

hidden themes mentioned by Santayana, ix, 129, 130, 132, 134, 180;

Oliver's view of Whitman, 133

Leibnitz, Gottfried Wilhelm, Baron von, x, 11, 28, 59, 64, 174, 193

Levinson, Henry S., ix

Lewis, C. I., 192

"literary psychology," Santayana's term, 4, 38, 76, 105, 108

Locke, John, 11, 16

logical positivism, 4, 7-9, 31, 33, 64, 65, 80, 185, 191-93

Longinus, 94

"Lord Jim." *See* Darnley, Jim

Lotze, Rudolph Hermann, 11, 54, 123, 147, 170, 183

Lovejoy, A. O., 12

Lowell, Abbot Lawrence, 182

Lowell, Robert, 11, 169, 182

Lucretius, 4, 11, 17, 18, 21, 30, 39, 40, 99, 101, 106, 107, 110, 115, 181

Lyon, Richard C., 28

M

Machiavelli, Niccolo, 155

Magic Mountain, The (Mann), 114, 137, 138

Maimonides, Moses, 11, 171

Malcolm, Norman, 8

Mann, Thomas, 114, 115, 118, 137, 138

Marcus Aurelius, 11, 45, 162, 165

Maritain, Jacques, 151

Marx, Karl, 23, 101, 108, 150, 157

mathematics, Santayana's view of, 4, 7, 72, 77, 108, 153, 171

matter (substance), Santayana's concept of, 12, 14, 16-19, 23, 24, 26, 33, 35, 39, 40, 43, 44, 46, 50, 53-58, 62-65, 67-81, 83, 84, 92, 95, 99-112, 138, 146-50, 152, 157, 161, 163, 177;

compared to God the Father, 112

McCormick, John, ix, x, 12, 111, 188, 193

Mill, John Stuart, 34

Miller, Perry, 154

Milton, John, 11, 90, 162, 171
Mommsen, Theodor, 1

Moore, George Edward, 11, 32, 58, 178, 185, 187, 188

Munitz, Milton K., 31, 176-78

Mussolini, Benito, 179, 185, 191

N

natural sciences, Santayana's view of, 4, 7, 73, 153, 171

Neoplatonism, 23

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, 11, 42, 93, 101, 106, 145, 149, 164, 167, 175

Novalis (Georg Friedrich Philipp von Hardenberg), 32

O

Occam, William of, 8, 140

Olafson, Frederick A., 191

P

Palmer, George Herbert, 16, 183

Parmenides, 43, 56

Pater, Walter, 1, 2, 65, 100, 101, 183

Pearson, Karl, 9

Phelps, William Lyon, 116, 117, 126, 128

Pinkerton, Helen, 6

Planck, Max, 7

Plato, 11, 20-23, 26, 50, 53, 54, 56, 64, 109, 164, 166, 174, 190;

Republic, 21;

theory of forms (ideas), 15, 21-23, 50, 53-56, 64, 101, 102;

Timaeus, 50, 54

Plotinus, 73, 166

Plutarch, 47

Potter, Warwick, 59, 90

Pound, Ezra, 11, 169

pre-Socratic philosophers, 4

progress, Santayana's view of, 2, 57, 139, 151, 158

psyche, Santayana's term, 3, 14, 23, 27, 42, 44, 49, 78-80, 97, 102, 106, 124, 129, 134, 144, 154, 158, 174, 178;

defined, 79, 80;

comparable to organism, 14, 79, 80, 102, 105, 106, 144, 148, 161, 174, 178

Q

Quine, W. V., 8, 170

R

Racine, Jean, 47

Ransom, John Crowe, 76, 174

Renan, Joseph Ernest, 1

Robinson, Edwin Arlington, 179

Romanticism, Santayana's concept of, 7, 19, 39, 41, 42, 76, 110, 131, 159, 162, 165

Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 83

Royce, Josiah, 11, 18, 26, 28, 57, 123, 147, 183

Ruskin, John, 1

Russell, Bertrand, x, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 14, 20, 30, 31, 33, 37, 39, 50, 51, 56-59, 62, 75, 89, 123, 128, 129, 158, 170, 171, 174, 178, 180-91

Russell, Frank, 91, 116, 128, 129, 131, 189, 190

S

Saatkamp, Herman J., Jr, ix

Sainte-Beuve, Charles Augustin, x

"Sanborn" (unidentified friend of Santayana), 86, 117

Santayana, George:

aesthetic philosophy of, 12, 17, 23, 32, 37, 52, 63, 65, 94, 100-102, 156, 157, 160;

as critic of American values, xi, 30, 57, 80, 85, 86, 108, 121-24, 126, 128, 133, 139, 143, 156, 174, 181;

and Buddhism, 155, 166;

weakness for Byronic figures, 19, 127, 130, 131;

and Calvinism, 19, 141, 161;

at Cambridge University, 11, 20, 91, 191;

and Catholicism, 10, 25, 60, 61, 69, 79, 91, 92, 100, 101, 119, 120, 124, 126, 127, 133, 140, 147, 150, 151, 153, 154, 158, 160, 163, 166, 169, 174, 178;

critique of Christian values, 6, 35, 36, 39, 42, 44-46, 55, 135, 140, 153, 158, 161-63, 166;

sense of detachment, 13, 20, 57-59, 61, 62, 82, 83, 85, 88, 89, 94-98, 126, 132, 136, 137;

view of England and the English, 16, 88, 89, 92, 93, 135, 136, 152, 154;

on Freud, 172;

critique of German philosophy, 7, 16, 17, 40, 42, 43, 76, 80, 88, 93, 106, 108, 145-47, 149, 151, 159, 161, 164, 170, 175, 183;

at Harvard, 2, 20, 26, 50, 57, 60, 81-88, 90-92, 101, 104, 117, 127, 129, 133, 136, 173, 179-82, 191, 192;

critique of Hebraism, 28, 39, 45, 48, 151, 153, 155-57, 161, 162;

emphasis on identity, 4, 13, 30, 38, 51, 61, 65, 70, 96, 114, 130, 137-39, 141, 154, 155, 161;

on Indian philosophy, 9, 18, 39, 43, 62, 107, 149;

distrust of intimacy, 14, 64, 83, 87, 88, 126, 130, 132;

and Ionic philosophy, 9, 107, 149, 153;

ef-

fort at harmonizing irrationalities, 34, 95, 101, 102, 126, 149, 158, 166;

as a character in *The Last Puritan*, 113, 114, 137, 140, 165;

residence in London, 89, 91, 124;

prejudice favoring Mediterranean cultures and values, 18, 25, 92, 131, 133;

and metanoia, 59, 84, 90, 132;

moral philosophy of, 4, 22, 28, 30, 32-35, 39-41, 43, 45-47, 50, 51, 53, 71, 76, 80, 101, 106, 143, 144, 148, 152, 155, 156, 158, 161, 162, 165, 175, 177, 178, 185, 187;

view of Moslems, 131, 153, 155;

on Mussolini and fascism, 92, 127, 167, 171, 178, 179, 181, 185, 191;

distrust of mysticism, 7, 14, 33, 38, 42, 48, 96, 142, 149, 151;

myths and misinformation about, 169, 179, 181, 182, 191;

assimilation of other philosophies, x, 7, 11, 12, 22, 25, 31, 173;

opposition to egotism in philosophy, 7, 16, 19, 38, 40-42, 79, 80, 116, 141, 145, 150, 155,

and relations with parents, 82, 85, 87, 90, 92, 99, 100, 103, 128, 182;

Platonism, x, 20-24, 26, 30, 50, 52-56, 58, 96, 97, 101, 109, 161, 162, 164-66, 174, 177, 183, 193;

as a poet, 1, 2, 60, 66, 74, 75;

and pragmatism, x, 15, 28, 52, 97, 161, 162;

as a prose stylist, 1-4, 6, 7, 10, 31, 100, 113;

157-62, 176, 184, 186;

on the Reformation and the Protestant outlook, 7, 33, 42, 57, 80, 100, 127, 133, 140, 141, 150, 153, 162;

residence in Rome, xi, 83, 92, 93, 169, 176, 181, 189;

173-76, 184, 189;

views on sex, 38, 122, 129, 130, 132, 134, 189;

skepticism of, 5, 11, 83, 94, 110, 143, 172, 192;

Spanish qualities in character, xi, 29, 58, 62, 69, 83, 84, 120, 181, 190

Sartre, Jean Paul, 73, 74, 170, 193

Schilpp, Paul Arthur, 31

Schopenhauer, Arthur, 11, 17-19, 28, 38, 42, 147, 163, 164, 171, 174, 183

Shakespeare, William, 3, 11, 47, 88, 116, 134, 174, 180

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 4, 51

Singer, Irving, xi, 12, 173

Socrates, 11, 21, 22, 29, 39, 43, 46, 53, 55, 62, 71, 162, 166

"solipsism of the present moment," Santayana's phrase, 14, 40, 97, 109

Spencer, Herbert, 15

Spinoza, Benedict (or Baruch), x, 4, 10-12, 17-19, 23-48, 50, 56, 57, 59, 63-65, 71-74, 101, 139, 140, 143, 144, 146-48, 155, 162, 163, 165, 173, 176, 178, 181;

conatus (principle of self-preservation), 23, 24, 27, 37, 38;

concept of essence different from Santayana's, 43, 44, 50, 56, 57, 63, 71, 74;

concept of immortality, 36, 40, 44, 46, 148;

Deus sive natura, 35, 56, 73, 141, 146, 176;

"divine right of the real" (Santayana's phrase), 4, 10, 29, 32, 33, 39, 40, 45, 56, 58, 147, 156, 176;

intellectual love of God, 38, 46;

moral philosophy accepted by Santayana, 4, 26, 27, 30, 32, 35, 71, 101, 143, 144, 155, 178;

natura naturans, 46;

Santayana's criticism of, x, 28, 33, 36-39, 43-48, 56, 71, 72, 139, 173;

as foundation to Santayana's thought, x, 4, 10, 12, 17, 25-28, 46, 101;

Santayana's excitement in reading, 26, 28, 46;

source of Santayana's idea of spirit, 3, 10, 12, 14, 23, 31, 44, 62, 64, 65, 67, 68, 70, 72, 76, 80, 81, 91, 92, 97, 103, 104, 109, 111-16, 133, 134, 138, 160-62, 164

Sprigge, Timothy L. S., ix, 12, 27, 173

Sterne, Lawrence, 113

Stevens, Wallace, 11

Stoicism, 39, 94, 163

Strong, Charles Augustus, 88, 146

Sturgis, George, 84

Sturgis, Howard, 91, 92, 113

Sturgis, Susana, 59, 82, 85, 90, 92, 172

Sturgis family, 68, 84, 91, 92

T

Tate, Allen, 76

Taylor, Peter, 169

Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, 94, 129

Thales, 11

Thoron, Ward, 87

transcendentalism:

American, 15, 144, 149;

German, 7, 12, 16, 19, 40, 77, 88, 141, 146, 175, 183;

philosophical, 4, 7, 12, 14-16, 19, 38, 40, 41, 43, 55, 70, 72, 76, 77, 80, 88, 91, 101, 102, 116,

transcendentalism (*continued*)

141, 144, 146, 148, 149, 152, 157-59, 163, 165, 166, 175, 176, 183

transcendental outlook, 14, 38, 40, 76, 77, 80, 91, 141, 149, 158, 159, 165

trope, Santayana's term, 3, 12, 22, 73, 78-80;

defined, 78, 79

truth, Santayana's concept of, 16, 18, 22, 24, 27, 44-46, 49, 58, 74, 78, 81, 114-16, 138, 153, 161, 166, 191

U

Unitarianism, 80, 84, 141, 142, 154, 164

V

Valéry, Paul, 1, 6, 61

Van de Weyer, Mario (character in *The Last Puritan*), 113, 114, 119, 131, 135-37, 139, 140

Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro), 11, 33, 47

Vivas, Eliseo, 30

W

Wang, Hao, 8, 9

Weatherbee, Caleb (character in *The Last Puritan*), 133, 150, 151

Wharton, Edith, 115

Whitehead, Alfred North, 3, 9, 11, 21, 34, 52, 63, 170, 173, 185, 190, 191

Whitman, Walt, 4, 6, 108, 129, 131, 133, 151, 152, 154, 155, 174, 184;

Santayana's view of, 131, 152, 174;

William James on, 184

Wilson, Edmund, x, 11, 169

Winters, Yvor, 154

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 3, 4, 8, 31, 170

Woodward, Anthony, ix

Y

Yeats, W. B., 51, 141